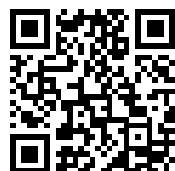

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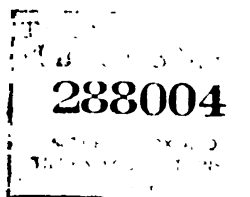
A NOVEL.

Miss Elizabeth M. Child (Grove) Bell

BY

KAMBA THORPE. pseud

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THE LITTLE JOANNA.

CHAPTER I.

THE LADIES OF BASILWOOD.

"FOR lo! the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land!"

By these immemorial and infallible signs had Spring declared her sovereignty in our valley; and, before the sun was well above the wooded hills beyond the river, Miss Basil was in the garden, attired for work in an old, well-worn drab merino, a pair of leather gauntlets that had seen service, and the huge, traditional sun-bonnet of the South, formed by stretching a piece of calico over a sheet of pasteboard. It was a point of conscience with this indefatigable woman to be in the garden betimes; for there was always much to be done, and the laborers were few—consisting, in fact, with the exception of a little occasional extra help, of none but herself and old Thurston, the gray-haired negro man-of-all-work, who, with a peculiar fidelity compounded of laziness and rheumatism, still clung to the impoverished remnant of his "ole marster's family."

The magical radiance of the April morning, scattering the mists that hung about the river and the valley, revealed many a fair upland green with springing corn, and a rusty little town half veiled in vines; but nowhere, in all that beautiful, hill-circled valley, through which our narrow and impetuous river pursues its tortuous course, did that April morning linger with so tender, so revivifying grace as about the picturesque old country-place of the Basils, a mile beyond the deep and tangled glen that marks the

northern limit of our town of Middleborough.

A large, old-fashioned house, with wings and galleries, sadly in want of paint, surrounded by extensive but long-neglected grounds, here proclaimed in the face of rejuvenated Nature—"Nature, au front serein, comme vous oubliez!"—the sad legend, *Troy was!* and the April sunbeams, playing at hide-and-seek amid the tangled shrubbery, or tracing quaint arabesques on the weather-stained walls and moss-grown roof, seemed now to be in quest of the vanished past, and now to be doing their utmost to adorn what they could not restore; while from the grove beyond the boundary-fence, where a Cherokee rose lavished its star-like blooms, the murmurous voice of wood-pigeons lent its rustic charm to the scene, and mingled harmoniously with the gurgling cadences of the brook rushing through the ravine.

But the pale, care-worn woman, whose huge sun-bonnet shut out the sight of every thing but the weeds she was industriously pulling from among the strawberry-vines, cared for none of these things. It was business and not pleasure that brought her into the garden so early, and in her grim idolatry of duty she would have thought it an extravagance to yield a moment to idle enjoyment of the charms that spring had thrown around the scene of her labors. She gave herself to her allotted task, not with sullenness, indeed—for Miss Basil expected to make money by that strawberry-bed—but with that joyless briskness characteristic of one who, in old Thurston's forcible *parlance*, "was set on to a bigger day's work than twenty-four hours could be made to compass without transgressing the night!"

A sore trial to him was Miss Basil's unflagging energy, and, but for the convenience of rheumatism, he must have found the place too hard on his dilatory, ease-loving nature. But though, like all energetic people, Miss Basil had an uncompromising abhorrence of laziness, she believed in the old man's rheumatism firmly and feelingly, having herself a slight personal acquaintance with the complaint; and old Thurston was not slow to take advantage of her credulity and her sympathy.

"Look at her, to be sho'!" he grumbled, as he came up the broad walk with a laborious hobble, assumed for the nonce the moment he espied the figure in the strawberry-bed; "down on her knees in the dew an' the grit, an' 'zaustin' the quality of her raisin' with constant harryin' the ground. Sich distraction after work is ill-convenient to a born lady. That poo' white trash, now, waitin' at the gate on his skeer-crow horse, thinks he's good as she is."

Thurston, who had not yet taken hoe in hand, was coming from the mournful contemplation of the nettles among the raspberry-bushes, in answer to a call of "Hello! hello! hello!" repeated at short intervals in a monotonous, hopeless voice, which proceeded, apparently without any volition on his part, from a small, fallow, ill-clad lad of twelve or fourteen years, perhaps, who, seated astride a starveling horse, was waiting at the gate that opened on the grove.

This lad, Aleck Griswold, who lived about half a mile beyond, always brought the mail over from town for the ladies of Basilwood. That is to say, he brought the mail whenever there was any thing to bring; but, generally speaking, he came empty-handed, and then, merely waiting for old Thurston to appear, he would shake his head, dig his heels into his poor beast's hollow sides, and make off, leaving his victim grumbling at "them deceivin' ways of poo' white trash." This morning, however, the ladies of Basilwood were favored; the boy held three letters in the freckled hand extended over the gate.

"There'll be one apiece," said old Thurston, receiving the letters with an air of importance.

"There won't be one apiece, nuther, as you'll see when you make out to read the bucking on 'em," said Aleck Griswold, de-

risively. "There'll be two for one, and one for t'other. Little Miss Joanna don't never count in the way of letters."

"Two white ones and a yaller one," mused old Thurston. Now, old Thurston could not read a line out of the time-honored, blue-backed spelling-book; but he knew that Miss Basil, who for years had been house-keeper and manager-general of the domestic affairs of Basilwood, often received these yellow envelopes from a certain provision-merchant in the town, to whom she, on her own responsibility, consigned whatever surplus supplies the small territory under her command could be made to yield; for, while Mrs. Basil, true to the tradition of her fathers, was planting cotton (by proxy, so to speak, in the person of Mr. Josiah Griswold, who rented her land on shares), and hardly making more than enough to pay taxes, Miss Basil, who had early learned to honor the day of little things, was quietly adding to the small revenue of Basilwood by turning a penny here and a penny there, in every way that industry and ingenuity could devise. "The yaller one is certain for Miss Pamela?" said old Thurston, inquiringly.

"You hit it that time!" said the boy, giving his skeleton nag the accustomed admonition to move on. "Now, don't drop 'em, nor nuthin';" and, with this caution, he rode away.

"If you don't mind and hurry back to yo' hoe, the grass'll be on to yo' tracks," muttered old Thurston, looking after him; then, in a highly self-satisfied condition, he went on to the house to deliver Mrs. Basil her letters. It was only proper that Mrs. Basil should be served first; and the strawberry-bed was rather out of his way; why should he, "all disjointed" as he was, take any unnecessary steps? He could carry the yellow envelope to Miss Basil as he went back to contend with the nettles. So he came, bareheaded, and bowing with a suppleness that belied what he called "the array of his jints," into Mrs. Basil's presence. One of the old school was Thurston, and proud of the manners which he boasted of having learned from old Judge Basil himself.

He found Mrs. Basil in the large, rather sombre apartment that during the judge's lifetime had been used as a library, but which was now converted into a sitting-room.

Here, when there were no visitors in the house, Mrs. Basil, who could never conform to Miss Basil's extremely early hours, took her meals alone. A small, round table, with a service of old-fashioned silver and china, stood near the open window, through which this April morning poured a flood of sunshine, and in a large, well-worn arm-chair at the side of this table sat Mrs. Basil, waiting for her solitary breakfast.

A white-haired, near-sighted, handsome woman of fifty-two was this stately, *fainéante* widow of good, easy, old Judge Basil. Her black dress was not new, but it was of fine material. She wore no ornaments; but her left hand rested lightly upon an ivory-headed staff of curious workmanship, itself no mean ornament, and without which she was never seen. It was not on account of any infirmity that she always carried that handsome staff, but because it was an heirloom in her family, and because, perhaps, it added to that air of lofty calm which was her peculiar characteristic; for Mrs. Basil had been much admired in her day, and knew her good points and how to enhance them. She was not above medium height, but so erect was she, and so much did that conspicuous staff add to the dignity of her presence, that people naturally thought her tall. The world, we know, was not correctly informed in regard to the stature of the Grand Monarque until long years after his death; and so, until the inevitable measure was taken, Mrs. Basil's world entertained an exaggerated estimate of her inches.

There had been a time within the memory of Middleborough when Mrs. Basil, who became old Judge Basil's second wife at a somewhat mature age, lived in splendor; and something of the tarnished glory of that luxurious era still seemed to cling to her in the many habits of a luxurious life that she still retained. She submitted with dignity, indeed, to many privations that could not be avoided; she willingly denied herself in the article of dress; she did not murmur when the one poor horse that drew the unpretending (not to say shabby) little rockaway she had been forced to substitute for her handsome carriage was harnessed to the plough; and she resigned herself very composedly to the necessity of having one man-servant fulfill the duties of gardenar, coachman, and general factotum; but two things there were

in which the old judge's thrifty cousin could never prevail against the old judge's impoverished widow—Mrs. Basil would never refuse to entertain her relations, and she would never consent to take her meals at those uncivilized hours which Miss Basil, for health and economy's sake, rigidly adhered to.

"You have letters for me, Thurston?"—extending her small white hand, and speaking in the soft, indolent voice of a person of infinite leisure. "Oh, I hope Miss Basil sees that little Aleck Griswold receives some trifle for his trouble?" This she invariably said whenever the arrival of letters reminded her of the boy, but she just as invariably forgot him the next moment.

"Yes, ma'am," said old Thurston, bowing low—not that he knew, for Miss Basil rarely let her right hand know what her left hand did.

Mrs. Basil did not hear him; she was already absorbed in her letter, which she had opened eagerly the instant she saw the well-known writing, without staying even to glance at the other which she held in her hand.

"Any orders, ma'am, for Miss Pamela?" said old Thurston. It behooved him, he thought, to discover whether these letters foreboded visitors, as letters at this season generally did; for Mrs. Basil's kinsfolk from the coast still found Basilwood, even in its decadence, a pleasant retreat in warm weather: the rooms were spacious, fruit was plentiful, and Mrs. Basil, in spite of straitened means, was a gracious hostess.

"Oh, I'll see Miss Basil myself," she said, without looking up. "You may go."

"There'll be visitors certain, and Miss Pamela she'll take it hard about providin'," said old Thurston to himself, as he made his way toward the strawberry-bed, so full of speculation that he quite forgot to limp, although Miss Basil, who had risen from her stooping posture, stood watching every step.

But Miss Basil was not thinking of old Thurston's steps.

"Any letters for me, Thurston?" she asked, anxiously.

She had pushed back the deep sun-bonnet which, indeed, she did not wear through any regard for her complexion, but as a safeguard to health, and the pale, delicate face, with the restless, sad gray eyes, and the dark hair streaked with silver, was exposed

to the full blaze of the sun. Tall, and slight, and angular, was she, and utterly without grace of pose or motion, yet she had all the dignity of a thorough lady, and old Thurston bowed as low before her as he did before Mrs. Basil herself.

"One of these yaller letters," said he.

"Is that all?" said she, in a disappointed tone, and a look of dismay crept into her eyes.

"And two white ones for the madame."

"How do you know they are for her?" said Miss Basil, impatiently, crushing the letter Thurston had already given her, unread, into her pocket. "Let me see them," she demanded, peremptorily stretching out her hand.

"Aleck Griswold, he told me so," said old Thurston, apologetically; "and I carried them straight to the house. It's all right, Miss Pamela; I give 'em into the madame's own hands."

Thurston always spoke of Mrs. Basil as the "madame."

A flush of vexation swept over Miss Basil's pallid face.

"In future, Thurston," said she, evidently struggling to speak calmly, "always bring the mail first to me. Mrs. Basil is not up every day at this hour."

Old Thurston, with rather a crestfallen look, went off to "study" about taking up the hoe against the nettles, and Miss Basil began again to pull up the weeds. How long she had worked she did not know—for her thoughts were afar—when a voice at her side said:

"Pamela, here is a letter for you; it was given me by mistake."

Miss Basil almost thought she had dreamed the words, they were so true to her hope, so foreign to her expectation; but when she turned suddenly and saw Mrs. Basil standing before her, she started up in alarm; it was so very unusual for Mrs. Basil to come out before the dew was off.

Poor Miss Basil! who had lived for years on a trembling hope of which Mrs. Basil had no suspicion, was forever haunted by the shadow of a fear. She knit her shaking fingers together as if to steady herself, and stammered, wildly:

"What—what is—the matter?"

Her voice died away in a terrified whisper.

"A letter for you," said Mrs. Basil, coldly.

She was not nervous nor excitable herself, and she had no sympathy for nervous, excitable people.

"Oh, thank you," Miss Basil said, trying to speak with equal indifference.

She did not look at Mrs. Basil, and her face was hidden by the big sun-bonnet, so that the two slow tears rolling over her faded cheeks fell unseen. One glance she gave the letter before she consigned it to her pocket, and then, to Mrs. Basil's surprise and annoyance, she dropped on her knees among the strawberry-vines again without another word.

"Pamela is *such* a drudge," Mrs. Basil thought, with impatient contempt. "She hasn't a thought above work. She makes nothing of my coming out in this morning dew for her accommodation."

How, indeed, was she to understand that Miss Basil, who was unconscious now of the sort of frantic industry with which she was pulling up the weeds, had dropped so suddenly upon her knees with no other thought than quietly to offer up a devout thanksgiving? Mrs. Basil contemplated her a moment in half-scornful silence before she said:

"Pamela, I have something to say to you after a while. I cannot stand here now; I have not yet breakfasted."

"Very well," said Miss Basil, from the depths of her sun-bonnet. "Shall I come to you in half an hour? It is not prudent to walk out in the morning on an empty stomach, I know."

Mrs. Basil turned away impatiently.

"She tries to evade me, as if she thought I would pry into her correspondence!" she said to herself, indignantly.

She would have resented the imputation of low curiosity, yet she was conscious, as she walked back to the house, of a feeling of disappointment. She had tried in vain to decipher the blurred, illegible post-mark, and thought she might have sent the letter by the servant that brought in her breakfast, but she had preferred to deliver it herself. It seemed a little hard that after she had taken all that trouble Miss Basil had not appreciated it sufficiently to offer a word in explanation of a correspondence for which Mrs. Basil found it difficult to account.

"It is not possible that she can have a

lover," she mused, as she sipped her coffee. "She's not ten years younger than I. It must be from old Miss Hawkesby, I fancy; but I don't see why she should be so reticent about a letter from that old woman. However, it is no affair of mine."

And thus Mrs. Basil thought she had dismissed the subject from her mind.

CHAPTER II.

WHO COMES NOW?

MISS BASIL'S position at Basilwood was neither easy nor altogether pleasant, but habit and circumstance had combined to fix and keep her there. She had come to Middleborough a stranger, and though more than twenty years had now passed, a stranger she still remained, and something of a mystery, which is always the case when a person seems sedulously to shun society. Yet no one had ever hesitated about receiving her, for had not the estimable Judge Basil, whose remote cousin she was, graciously accorded her a home beneath his roof? She was homeless and friendless when she came to him, but in time she had requited his kindness a thousand-fold by an unselfish devotion to his domestic interests. For, though the judge's first wife was then living, she was a confirmed invalid, and but for Miss Basil the household affairs must have been sadly neglected, and the little orphan grandchild, Joanna, who, some years after Miss Basil came, was born and left motherless at Basilwood, must have suffered for proper care.

The second Mrs. Basil, who succeeded the first after a very short interval, was never known to assume any burden that she could avoid, and finding so excellent a house-keeper and manager in charge when she became mistress of Basilwood, was too well content in the ease and comfort afforded by such an arrangement to disturb it; and thus it had continued, and seemed to promise still to continue, for Miss Basil having far less enterprise than energy, shrank more and more from the turmoil of the outer world. She was not fond of the judge's widow, but she had a strong attachment for the old homestead, where she had led, for so many years, the peaceful life of a recluse, and she was still pleased to remain, although she knew

that she was spending her energies with no prospect of an adequate return. Mrs. Basil herself had only a life interest in Basilwood, which after her death would pass into the possession of her nephew, Arthur Hendall. For this reason Miss Basil entertained no favorable regard toward young Hendall, whom she had never met, and did not wish ever to meet.

It must not be supposed that Judge Basil did not appreciate all that Miss Basil did in his home. He was the last man in the world to accept so lavish a requital of his kindness and hospitality as a matter of course; but, good, easy gentleman of the old school that he was, while he knew and feelingly acknowledged that his friendless cousin's services were inestimable, he would have deemed it an insult to offer her a house-keeper's salary. She was a lady, he said, with pride, and she should live in his house forever as a lady. Her services, therefore, were rendered of her own free choice, and not at his instance. It was always his intention, however, to make some provision for her in his will; but death overtook him suddenly, he had lived extravagantly, and his estate was found to be insolvent. Basilwood, once a highly-improved place, was mortgaged for more than its value, to old Mr. Hendall, Mrs. Basil's father, who settled it, together with two or three hundred acres adjacent, upon his daughter during her life, and, after her death, upon his grandson, Arthur. It was not to be expected that old Mr. Hendall, in settling his affairs for the next world, should take thought for Miss Basil, who was supposed to be able to take care of herself, nor yet for the judge's destitute granddaughter, whose own relations—the few that remained—ignored her; was it not enough that she too, by the grace of Mrs. Basil, continued still to find shelter at Basilwood?

The world, the gossiping Middleborough world that commented on everybody's affairs, said loudly that Mrs. Basil had done remarkably well, *all things considered* (a saving clause, always thrown in as a balance to judgment), by her husband's relations, when she continued to that queer Miss Basil, and that forlorn little Joanna, the friendly shelter of Basilwood. Miss Basil, had she chosen so to do, might easily have shown the world how indispensable she was to the judge's moneyless widow; but Miss Basil was the most

reticent of women, and all she asked of the world was to be let alone. She was well content to immure herself at Basilwood, that she might thus secure a proper home in which to keep the little Joanna.

She had accepted this child, motherless from the day of her birth, as a sacred trust, for the sake of Judge Basil's well-tryed friendship, and everybody commended her unwearied devotion to her young charge. And Miss Basil was indeed devoted to the child, but with a devotion in which a stern sense of duty usurped the blind, unquestioning faith of love. Joanna was to her an object in life, but not the object for which she lived.

Middleborough had long quite forgotten that bright young lad, whom, years ago, the judge had received at Basilwood as his ward; but Miss Basil remembered him always; he was enshrined in her heart, the idol of her affections, and his place no other could ever take. He was but a baby of six years, Judge Basil's little namesake, when he was brought to Basilwood, where Miss Basil had already been some time established in her responsible post; and when he came crying for the father and mother he had left dead in the distant town of the West that she used to know, she took him in her lap and cried with him, and day by day, with unflinching tenderness and devotion, so won the child's heart that he asked, at last, to call her mother. But prim Miss Basil said "no" to this; she did not think it would be right; he might call her "Pamela," however. Yet she gave him all the mother-love her heart could hold. The little Joanna who came a few years later, and was given to her from the day of her birth, received, indeed, every motherly care and kindness; but all the passionate tenderness of Miss Basil's heart was monopolized by the handsome boy now growing into a bold, promising youth, in whom Judge Basil took no little pride. Somewhat spoiled, somewhat willful, perhaps, the boy was; but so affectionate, and so devoted to her, that Miss Basil could see no fault in him; and her influence over him was such a support to the judge's mildly-exercised authority, that in spite of some discreditable escapades, some boyish follies and extravagances, it might safely have been predicted that he would sow his wild-oats early and do well at last.

But—he had run away soon after the judge's second marriage, driven, as Miss Basil firmly believed, by Mrs. Basil's want of forbearance. Whither he had gone none knew, and no one cared except Miss Basil. When he left, she had a long illness, and lay for many days at death's door. Many good people said that it was a visitation on her for making an idol of human clay; and everybody sympathized with "poor, dear Mrs. Basil who had had such a trial in that boy;" thus voting his departure a good riddance, they made all haste to forget him. No one suspected, as the years went by, that from time to time letters came to one faithful, patient watcher, for Miss Basil was good at keeping her own counsel, and nobody in Middleborough imagined that she looked for the day when Basil Redmond should return, "bringing his sheaves with him."

Sustained by such a hope, Miss Basil could patiently await a time, not far distant now, she felt, when Mrs. Basil should be made to suffer remorse and humiliation for her harshness and impatience toward the judge's young ward, whose small patrimony had vanished somehow in the reckless extravagance and bad management that had followed upon the judge's second marriage.

Yet Miss Basil was not conscious that any leaven of malice and uncharitableness infected the fair hope that fed her very life; was she not, by every means in her power, day after day, and year after year, serving Mrs. Basil better than Mrs. Basil, who had no head for business, would ever know? Did not Mrs. Basil find her always ready to wait upon her commands? At this very moment she knew, by an unfailing instinct, that Mrs. Basil was going to speak to her about making a room ready for some visitor. And was it not hard that any one should come now to eat up the early strawberries without paying for them, when she knew of two or three epicures and invalids in the town that would give a good price for the first that ripened? She did not approve of entertaining so much company; it was expensive and troublesome, and the burden of providing for the comfort of the guests all fell upon her; but she knew that it was useless to remonstrate, and, when she had pulled up all the weeds she meant to pull up that morning, she went in and changed her dress for a neat, dark calico, in which she presently appeared before Mrs. Basil.

Mrs. Basil was ready for the conference. She had breakfasted, and sent away the table.

"Pamela," said she, "which is the pleasantest room in the house?"

"Yours is," answered Miss Basil, with stoical calm.

She never openly rebelled against receiving visitors; but she could be aggravating. But Mrs. Basil would never condescend to notice any thing of that kind.

"Could you make the large room opposite mine ready to-day?"

There would have been no use in saying "No," as Miss Basil very well knew, so she said, "Yes."

"Do so, then, if you please," said Mrs. Basil, with unusual blandness; and then she paused, as if she would be inquired of.

But Miss Basil remained provokingly silent. What difference did it make to her who was coming? Were they not all more or less alike, these numerous relatives of her cousin's widow, self-indulgent people, who for the last five or six years had found it convenient and economical to spend more or less of the summer at Basilwood? Whether they came singly, or in couples, or in trios, they meant trouble, and they gave trouble, and Miss Basil could only thank a kind Providence that there were no children in the connection.

"You will see that every thing is made *thoroughly* comfortable," said Mrs. Basil, after a little pause. "To-morrow or next day I expect my nephew." She made the announcement with an air of triumph that seemed to demand congratulation; but Miss Basil clasped her hands with a start, and exclaimed in dismay, before she was well aware of her words:

"Mercy defend us! *The little Joanna!*"

It was an involuntary remonstrance against the inevitable; for poor Miss Basil had long known that sooner or later Mrs. Basil's nephew would come to Basilwood; and, unexpected though the announcement was, she felt as if she had lived all her life for this supreme moment. It would be an evil day, the day of his coming, she feared, for Arthur Hendall, she knew, was a young man of the gay world, and oh, what a giddy child was the little Joanna, with her heart upon her sleeve!

There was no need to give her thought

further words, however; Mrs. Basil, though she did not share these fears, understood them perfectly.

"Pamela," said she, stiffening visibly, "Joanna is a mere child—as yet."

But this reminder had no comfort for Miss Basil. She remembered (with what a sinking of heart!) that this little Joanna had lately acquired the art of twisting up her crisp, bronze-brown hair in a way that did not appertain to childhood, and, further, that she had clamored but yesterday for a demi-train! And how these notions of dress had arisen in the mind of this secluded child baffled Miss Basil's penetration, which was never very acute where character was concerned; yet, with an intuition very rare in her experience, she perceived that these aspirations after the vanities of the toilet gave a flat contradiction to Mrs. Basil's estimate of Joanna; for certainly, by these tokens, she was not "a mere child."

Perhaps Mrs. Basil, though she had never noticed how Joanna wore her hair, and though she was ignorant of the dispute about the demi-train, read Miss Basil's thought, for she added, immediately:

"Your fears, in any case, are absurd. Do you suppose that all the world is going to see Joanna with your admiring eyes?"

"But I don't admire Joanna, Heaven knows!" said Miss Basil, peevishly, resenting such an imputation upon the soundness of her judgment. "What is there to admire in her? A poor little brown mite that will never repay my care! Reckless, heedless, given over to the pomps and vanities of this wicked world—that's Joanna, for all my prayers, for all my pains—"

"There, Pamela," said Mrs. Basil, with dignity, "I can see no necessity whatever for thus disparaging my husband's granddaughter."

Mrs. Basil made rather a display of always remembering that Joanna was her husband's granddaughter; she was pleased to have the child call her "grandmamma;" but she was not fond of her, and, though she had checked Miss Basil, she herself saw so little to admire in Joanna that she could not understand why she should be an obstacle in the way of Arthur's coming to Basilwood. She wished to keep Arthur with her; she hoped to induce him to give up civil-engineering, with which he seemed just now to be in-

fatuated, and devote himself to planting; for, though planting was no longer the *otium cum dignitate* it had once been, Mrs. Basil found it hard to abjure her hereditary faith in the might of cotton. But, if Miss Basil was going to make a fuss about it on account of the little Joanna, she thought Miss Basil would do better to complain to old Miss Hawkesby, Joanna's great-aunt, who never yet had troubled herself about her young relative; and Mrs Basil was proudly conscious that *she* had done a good part by her husband's granddaughter.

She did not say any thing of this kind to Miss Basil; it would have sounded too quarrelsome; but, remembering the letter Miss Basil had that morning received, she was moved to ask whether Miss Hawkesby ever wrote.

"Sometimes, not often," said Miss Basil, reluctantly.

"She *does* remember Joanna, then? Pray what kind of woman is she? You know I have never seen her?"

Now, concerning old Miss Hawkesby, Miss Basil thought, and not altogether without reason, that if she would be content to settle down in some quiet place and economize, instead of wasting her time and her money traveling hither and thither, she might be able to do something for the little Joanna, as well as for Anita, Joanna's half-sister, whom the old lady had taken to live with her. Miss Basil, therefore, was not disposed to say any thing particularly flattering about old Miss Hawkesby.

"Heaven forbid that I should judge her!" she answered, with a highly-judicial air.

Mrs. Basil smiled faintly.

"Oh, I hope she may yet do something for our little Joanna," she said.

"I don't expect it, and I don't encourage the child to expect it!" Miss Basil answered, hastily, not without bitterness. "Joanna is very well as she is; I don't wish to be rid of her." An uneasy suspicion that Mrs. Basil meant to banish the child began to creep into her mind.

"Nor do I," said Mrs. Basil, serenely unconscious that any such wish lurked in her heart, and satisfied that she was influenced solely by a desire for Joanna's welfare; "but consider, Pamela, you and I cannot live forever."

Miss Basil turned pale, not at the thought

of death, but at the suggestion of Joanna left to struggle alone.

"The Lord will provide," she said, faintly.

"I honor your faith," Mrs. Basil answered, rather coldly; "but in your place I should think it necessary to make *some* provision for Joanna's future."

"I shall make provision for Joanna's future," said Miss Basil, hastily; then, seeing Mrs. Basil's surprise, she added, in some confusion, "by teaching her to lay up treasure where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. And I *don't* see," she continued, dolefully, "why we need discuss Miss Hawkesby. I am willing to keep Joanna; I've always taken care of her."

"O Pamela, if you disapprove of Joanna's profiting by her own relations," said Mrs. Basil, with an offended air, "it's no affair of mine; but I had only her good at heart, I'm sure."

Then Miss Basil grew penitent.

"You are very kind," she faltered; "and I'll go now and attend to the room."

CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER OF BASILWOOD.

"My surmise was correct, then," said Mrs. Basil to herself, as she sat alone. "That letter was from Miss Hawkesby. I'm glad she does not utterly forget the child; for if Pamela should die—she's never sick, it is true, but then some people do drop off so unexpectedly; the judge, her cousin, did—and if she were to die, what would become of Joanna? What could she mean by saying that she would make provision for Joanna's future? If she thinks to marry her to Arthur, she has less sense than I gave her credit for. It would be a fine thing for Joanna, but—as if Arthur could be such a fool! No, no; there is not the least danger; Pamela may spare her pains, as I shall not scruple to tell her, if I see any symptoms. But, then, it would be nice for Joanna if Miss Hawkesby would take her away—for some day she must cease to be a child—and give her a fair chance in this life. She has no advantage here, poor thing! and really I wonder Pamela doesn't make an effort to rouse the old lady to a sense of her duty."

Some slight fear that Miss Basil might

endeavor to bring about a match between Arthur and the judge's granddaughter had begun to trouble Mrs. Basil's mind, but there was no need for any such fear. A scheming woman, indeed, with an ordinary talent for match-making, would have seen in young Hendall's advent a rare chance for the little Joanna; but Miss Basil, though a most notable manager, was no schemer. She had not that absolute control of her feelings and prejudices so essential to a schemer. Human nature does not require strictly reasonable grounds for its likes and dislikes, as those of us who know some Dr. Fell are well-aware; and Miss Basil, disliking Arthur Hendall for no better reason than that he was Mrs. Basil's nephew, and the prospective owner of Basilwood, was very far from desiring to see Joanna married to him; she hoped, indeed, that Joanna would be sensible and never marry. As for any prospect of her marrying young Hendall, Miss Basil herself did not see more clearly than that, with all the advantages he had enjoyed, a simple country girl like this poor little Joanna was no match for him, in any sense. But she did not, like Mrs. Basil, believe so devoutly in the saving dignity of the Hendall blood; she did not believe that this young gentleman, rich in all the arts of worldlings, as Miss Basil could not doubt he must be, would deny himself for honor's sake, nor for dignity's sake, the pleasure of an idle flirtation, by way of pastime, if opportunity offered. And Joanna—Joanna was a little fool, and would believe every word he uttered!

So poor Miss Basil went sorrowing about her work, and turning over in her mind the means of guarding the inexperienced Joanna against the fascinations of Mrs. Basil's nephew. Not knowing exactly what would be best to say on the subject, her great object, just now, was to avoid Joanna; she did not choose to have her assistance in making ready for Mr. Hendall. But passing through the large, barn-like hall that led to the south wing, there was the girl, curled up in the window-seat, and playing with her kitten. At any other time Miss Basil would have reproved her for trifling, but now she took comfort in the sight; it seemed to prove Joanna still a child, in spite of her ready knack at hair-dressing, and her aspirations after demitresses.

The little Joanna was not, ordinarily, a

source of comfort to her precise, methodical kinswoman; for though removed from worldly influences, and growing up "like to a rose in a withering bower," under Miss Basil's own watchful eyes, the girl had come now to be, much to Miss Basil's confusion, a careless, idling young dreamer of seventeen, the very opposite in every respect of what her matter-of-fact cousin had striven to make her. She had received a desultory, haphazard sort of education; how far it had extended in regard to books, Miss Basil could never accurately tell; but she knew that Joanna could knit, could sew, could darn, could keep accounts, could bake bread, could make a custard and an omelet, for all these useful things, and many others, she herself had faithfully taught her; and she knew, moreover, to her sorrow, that this "child of many prayers" delighted in reading story-books, and hated Dr. Johnson and Hannah More with a hatred that was not ashamed. And no more than this, after seventeen years of intimate companionship, no more than this did Miss Basil know of Joanna; which, however, is hardly to be wondered at, seeing that, of all God's creatures, the most incomprehensible, perhaps, is a girl of seventeen.

Miss Basil, finding Joanna so childishy employed, wished her to remain a child, and began stealthily to retreat; but Joanna, looking up, with her thumb and forefinger arrested in the act of playfully pinching the kitten's ears, broke into a laugh, and said:

"Why do you go 'mousing' about so like an old cat, 'Mela? I'm wide awake'—so she was, indeed, Miss Basil sighed to see—"what a time you've been talking with the grandmamma. Who is coming, now?"

"Never you mind, child; young people should not be inquisitive. Play with your kitten," Miss Basil replied, with useless and therefore unwise evasion.

The little Joanna had asked this innocent question season after season, and had always received a direct answer. With a quick, impulsive movement she slipped from her high seat, dropping the startled kitten upon the floor, and fixed her large, dark eyes upon Miss Basil with a searching look; and Miss Basil never liked to meet those eyes, so unflinching, so unfathomable, so *comprehensive* were they; to *feel* them upon her now made her fidget uneasily.

"Pamela," said Joanna, deliberately, "I know; it is the—nephew."

"How *should* you know any thing about it?" said Miss Basil, in an injured tone, and flushing hotly.

"How should I know?" repeated Joanna. "Why, old Thurston told me there were letters for the grandmamma, and don't we all know that means visitors? And, if Miss Archer, or Mrs. Carew, or *that* Miss Ruffner were coming, you would say so at once."

Truly, her argument was conclusive. Joanna knew all about Mr. Arthur Hendall's title to Basilwood; Miss Basil had felt in duty bound to explain it as soon as the child was old enough to understand her position, but she had deemed it advisable to have as little as possible to say about young Hendall himself; she did not wish Joanna to run any risk of becoming interested in him in any way, and she invariably checked every attempt to make him the subject of conversation. But now the perplexed woman began to think she had made a mistake; she had lost so many opportunities of giving Joanna's mind the proper bias against him. It was not yet too late, however, perhaps; so she said, grimly:

"You know he is the master of Basilwood, Joanna; let us not forget that." It was not the wisest thing she could have said. Her words placed young Hendall before Joanna's quick imagination in a sort of picturesque light. *The master of Basilwood!* Did not that imply that the grandmamma's nephew occupied a peculiar position in regard to herself? Joanna had read too many romances not to feel a certain charm in the situation when she thought it over; and Miss Basil, who had hoped, as she would have said, "to set the child against the inheritor of her grandfather's old home," felt vexed and disappointed to see her begin again, with infantine playfulness, to pinch the kitten's ears. She did wish Joanna would show some human feeling.

"However, she *is* but a child, I suppose; and God forbid that I should teach her to cherish 'envy, hatred, and malice,' against any one!" Miss Basil said to herself, and went away; but, returning half an hour later, she was rather startled to find the volatile Joanna still sitting in the window, her kitten forgotten, her eyes bent on the floor, her whole demeanor expressive of deep thought. Miss

Basil knew, by old experience, that these fits of meditation boded no good; and she said, irritably:

"Get down, child, and find something to do. How often must I remind you of the folly and the sin of wasting your time?"

Joanna rose quickly, saying, with unwonted submission, "I am sure, 'Mela, I am willing to be useful. If you are going to see about Mr. Hendall's room, I am ready to help you. I have been thinking about my duty—"

Miss Basil trembled at the words. What was not this unaccountable Joanna capable of, if she had begun to think about *her duty*? "I don't want you; you will be in my way; go play with your kitten, child," she said, shortly, and made haste to leave her.

"Go—play—with—your—kitten, child," repeated the little Joanna, slowly, staring after her. "What can have come over Pamela to suppose that I can be playing with a kitten forever?" Then she turned again to the window, and pursued the current of her thoughts.

These summer visitors, so dreaded by Miss Basil, were hardly a source of greater pleasure to Mrs. Basil herself than to Joanna. True, she was always in the distant background, for Miss Basil, by way of keeping her young charge unspotted from the world, had never permitted her to mingle freely with Mrs. Basil's guests; but their mere presence at Basilwood gave her a glimpse of that alluring outside world from which she had been all her life so carefully secluded; and, better still, these well-bred, well-dressed people afforded her *models upon which to form herself*. For Joanna was ambitious; conscious of her deficiencies, she was laudably anxious to improve, and eager to seize every opportunity for improvement that offered. These were not many, for Basilwood was remote and isolated; and, partly on this account, partly because of Miss Basil's extremely retiring habits, poor little Joanna had grown up without companions or playmates, having never been at school. Miss Basil had taught her a little, and, for the rest, having a quick mind, she had picked up a fair stock of information, foraging among a lot of long-forgotten books stowed away in the garret, where she could read unmolested.

"A solitary child, shutting herself up between the leaves," books had taught her

much; but, with ready intelligence, she had soon perceived that there was something to be learned about this world and the people in it that books alone could never teach. The ladies that visited Basilwood, elderly, cold, and formal, for the most part, were not particularly attractive to young persons; yet, though she kept aloof from them, Joanna observed them studiously, and soon learned from them an idea of style and elegance which she greatly affected. She had thus acquired a theoretical knowledge of the ways of the fashionable world that would have amazed Miss Basil. The girl had very grave notions about fitting herself for life, for society, and she hoped that young Hendall would be an advantage to her in this way. It was no fault of his that he was master of Basilwood; "and surely," thought she, in the simplicity of her heart, "being a man, he must be wondrous wise."

But these innocent aspirations after "something better than she had known" Joanna buried in the depths of her own heart, not from any sense of shame, but from a dawning consciousness that her excellent cousin's idea of confidence was limited to the rigid truth about indisputable realities, and that her notion of sympathy meant nothing more than ministering to bodily ailments. Any thing that could not be classed as an actual, tangible fact, Miss Basil denominated fancifulness; so Joanna, perforce, having no one else to reveal herself to, kept her own counsel, and became a dreamer of dreams. She was dreaming now, as she sat in the window, an innocent dream of youth's fair possibilities, that she would not have hesitated to confide to Pamela, if only Pamela could understand!

But Miss Basil, all alone up-stairs, waging war against the dust and cobwebs that had accumulated during the winter, did not need to be told that Joanna's idle reveries were full of "the grandmamma's nephew;" she knew it instinctively—"and Joanna was the despair of her life!" she said, passionately. But she had striven hard to train up the child in the way she should go, and no sense of discouragement could make her relax her efforts—certainly she was not going to spare them now; she meant to do her duty by Joanna at all hazards—if only she knew what to do! Could she have believed that the warning would be heeded, she might have

been willing to relate to Joanna a page out of her own history; but nothing could have persuaded Miss Basil that any good would come of revealing her sad, romantic story. She could, however, be more than ever watchful; Joanna must be kept more strictly within bounds, for wasn't she a child still? and children should be retiring—she had always impressed that upon Joanna; it was no new doctrine she was about to preach. It had been a great cross to her, in these hard times, that Mrs. Basil would not conform to her hours for meals—an obstinacy that entailed much trouble and extra work—but now she saw a special providence in Mrs. Basil's luxurious habits; there would be the less occasion for Joanna to meet Mr. Hendall.

While she was meditating a suitable discourse to deliver to Joanna, or, rather, while she was debating with herself whether or not it would be advisable to say any thing on the subject of her fears, Mrs. Basil came in to inspect the room. She would gladly have assisted the work of preparation, but she never did know what to do. She always awoke to new life when the season came that brought the company she loved. In winter she vegetated; what was there for her to do but sit and wait for summer to bring back some semblance of the old, easy, joyous time when three-eighths of a cent more or less in the price of cotton made no difference to her? Easy as it seemed by comparison, her lot was really a harder one than Miss Basil's, who had the absorbing work of the garden, the orchard, the dairy, and the poultry-yard, to occupy her thoughts, not to mention the disappointing little Joanna.

Except an object to live for, Mrs. Basil had had every thing that life could give—wealth, beauty, position, influence, all had been hers, and what now remained but the dregs? Youth had vanished, wealth had vanished; she said very little about her losses in either respect; but her head had turned while contemplating the hopeless decadence of her condition, and often she was weary of her life. But not to-day; for was not her nephew Arthur coming at last?

Mrs. Basil had never seen him since he was a little fellow in his father's house, when she was living there, a *passée* belle, and fonder of his childish prattle than of all the homage she had ever commanded in society. No one had ever come so near her heart as this

only child of her only brother. But Fate had been against her here. When his parents died, Arthur went to his mother's relations, and he might have been utterly alienated from his aunt but for his interest in Basilwood. Mrs. Basil, therefore, had no jealousy of his claim upon the place, since it attached him to her; and now that his mother's childless brothers had gone out of the world like so many other men of reputed wealth in these times, leaving no vestige of their fortune behind them, Arthur must settle down to planting. It would be a good thing for him, it would be a good thing for her; he would have all that stanch respectability attaching to a landed proprietor, and he would improve the finances of Basilwood; something of the easy charm of old times would come back.

Mrs. Basil had long desired this day, and for joy could hardly contain herself. Under ordinary circumstances, she would not have cared for Miss Basil's sympathy; but now, without knowing what it was she wanted, she came restlessly into the room, passed her hands over the pillows, peered into the bureau-drawers, turned up the blinds and turned them down again, and annoyed Miss Basil not a little.

"O Pamela, are you sure that every thing is thoroughly attended to, the bedding well aired, and all that? You should have had Myra up to help you."

"But Myra is busy with the ironing," said Miss Basil, and in her heart she wished Mrs. Basil had something to do to keep her busy. But Mrs. Basil could do nothing but sew a little, and she did not always have the material to sew upon.

"Well, we must find an extra servant, I suppose," said she, as complacently as if an extra servant would cost nothing. "It is always the way in summer. I hope the room is well aired, and the bedding; I am very particular, because Arthur is by no means so well as I could wish him to be."

"An invalid?" queried Miss Basil, with interest, adjusting in her mind the advantages and disadvantages likely to result from Mr. Arthur Hendall's inability to leave his room. It would certainly keep him out of Joanna's way; but it would also entail much unprofitable labor. The advantages and disadvantages seemed about evenly balanced, and Miss Basil sighed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Basil, brightly, mistak-

ing the sigh for sympathy; "a tertian ague, attended by rheumatic symptoms, with some gastric disturbance."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Miss Basil, with an air of experience. "The remedy is quinine; and iodoform would benefit him."

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Basil, in an offended tone; "I consider it quite serious; it is the result of exposure in the swamp through which the New Central road is now being surveyed."

"Oh!" said Miss Basil, meekly.

She always wilted when Mrs. Basil begged her pardon.

But Mrs. Basil turned away unappeased. There was yet more to tell about Arthur, and in her then mood she might have told it if Miss Basil had not slighted his "symptoms" so. As if she would be permitted to prescribe in such a case! No, indeed; Mrs. Basil intended to send for Dr. Garnet as soon as Arthur should arrive.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS BASIL TAKES REFUGE IN A SONG.

YOUNG HENDALL arrived the next morning. He was a tall, handsome young man, but evidently the worse for the tertian ague and attendant symptoms, and when Miss Basil saw him her heart smote her.

"Heaven forgive me," she sighed, "that ever I should have rejoiced at his being obliged to keep his room!"

Bodily suffering always moved her compassion, and, though she mistrusted all handsome young men in general, and this one in particular, she went immediately to prepare for him such delicacies as only she could concoct; for, except administering physic, Miss Basil liked nothing so well as making dainty dishes for the sick.

But her compassionate feelings were doomed to meet a sudden shock. Intent upon her benevolent design, she came near stumbling over the little Joanna, who had been peeping through the crack of the dining-room door, at the imminent risk of pinching her nose.

"Mercy upon us, Joanna!" she exclaimed, in wrath. "What are you doing there?"

She almost wished the child *had* pinched her nose.

"Oh, do tell me what he is like, 'Mela!'" Joanna asked, eagerly.

Miss Basil, though she would have it that Joanna must remain a child, demanded, none the less, the discreet reticence of conscious womanhood.

"You are very improper, Joanna," said she, sharply, as she walked resolutely to the store-room. "All sick men are alike—be sure of that—never thinking of the everlasting trouble they give."

"O 'Mela!'" exclaimed Joanna, following in Miss Basil's wake, and speaking with enthusiasm. "I should not mind the trouble, for it isn't mere common sickness in his case. Haven't you heard? Only think of his being *wounded with a pistol in a—contest*!"—Joanna had an extravagant ambition to use "superior" language, and, no matter what she talked about, would hesitate for a high-sounding word—"with those dreadful burglars that broke into Mrs. Stargold's house in Westport the other day—the other night, you know I mean—Mrs. Elizabeth Stargold, the grandmamma's cousin"—Joanna never said "my grandmamma"—"an elderly lady, 'Mela, she is, living all alone, and e—normously wealthy, I do suppose. You see, I can tell you all about it. The papers called it a *thrilling adventure*, 'Mela, and—"

By this time they were in the store-room, and Miss Basil was trying on a large calico apron. She had appeared not to be listening, but she had heard, with the silence of exasperation, every word that the little Joanna, following at her heels, poured forth so eagerly; and she had finally made up her mind that this unwarrantable enthusiasm must be checked. As if it were not enough that Arthur Hendall must come to Basilwood at all, but he must come with the prestige of a hero! Yet, Miss Basil was going to make something good for him; oh, yes, she would repay him with kindness!

"You talk too much, Joanna," said she, giving a vicious tug at the apron-strings.

"But the grandmamma herself told me," persisted Joanna, simply. "You see, I wished to know, and so I asked her."

"*You—asked her!*" repeated Miss Basil, astonished. "Why, Joanna!"

"Why, of course," answered Joanna, with simplicity. "Why should I not ask her?"

Miss Basil couldn't explain why; so she said, lifting a warning finger that Joanna always associated with forbidden fruit:

"Take care, child; forwardness, you know, is not becoming in the young."

"But," said Joanna, argumentatively, "it was not unbecoming, for the grandmamma was pleased, I assure you. She commended my—my *urbanity* in asking about her nephew."

"Oh, *good* gracious, Joanna!" exclaimed Miss Basil; but whether from perplexity at Mrs. Basil's want of judgment in thus encouraging idle curiosity, or from impatience at Joanna's ambitious language, she herself could not have told.

"She did," said Joanna, quietly.

Miss Basil, having no words in which to express her conflicting sentiments, began with a great clatter to gather together an array of bowls and spoons.

"What are you going to make, 'Mela?'" said Joanna, with great interest, planting her elbows on the table, and cradling her cheeks in her hands. "Let it be something very, very nice, *do*; for, oh, he is as brave—as brave as a lion! And I do admire—*proovess* in a man!"

"Joanna, child, I wish you wouldn't!" ("Wouldn't" *what*? Miss Basil did not, under the circumstances, know how to be definite.) "You always do contrive to get just in my way!" said poor Miss Basil, lugubriously.

"*Blanc-mange!*" cried Joanna, clapping her hands softly, as she moved away to the other end of the table at the instigation of Miss Basil's remorseless elbows. "And you do make such delicious *blanc-mange*, 'Mela! I hope you are going to put it in the rose-mould."

"No, I am *not*," said Miss Basil, crossly. "Don't be silly, Joanna. It's only a milk-punch I shall make."

"I am sure he would like that," said Joanna, not feeling the rebuff; for was not 'Mela always cross when grandmamma's company came?

"And why should *you* mind what he likes?" said Miss Basil, severely. "I dare say we may rue the day he came."

"I'm sure he's much nicer to have here than the Archers or that Miss Ruffner."

"Joanna," said Miss Basil, suspending the spoon over the yellow bowl of milk, "Mrs. Basil's relations, remember."

"She's just horrid, Miss Ruffner is, for all that!" said Joanna, unabashed. "Don't I know her? Forever and forever boasting about her—her *pedigree*, and always, always calling me 'child,' and asking whether I know my catechism, and I every bit of sixteen last summer when she was here! But, O Pamela!"—clasping her hands with fervor, in a sudden transition from intense indignation to intense admiration, and sighing forth her words fervently—"she *did* wear *love-ly* trains!"

And Joanna, with her hands still clasped, bent her supple knees so as to make her short skirts trail on the floor, looking down at them over her shoulder with an absorbing interest, very distressing to poor Miss Basil, who thought the love of dress the root of all evil.

"Ah, child, 'vanity of vanities!'" she murmured, warningly.

"Oh, yes, I know all about *that*!" said Joanna, with an impatient twitch at her skirts. "I've heard it a *thousand* times. It's all because you don't care for trains and the like."

"Trains and the like are not exempt from moth and rust; remember that, child," said Miss Basil, dolefully. "I must always remind you, Joanna, of the folly of setting your heart on the things of this world."

"Oh, dear, 'Mela!'" said Joanna, with a shrug. "Were you never young, in all your life, that you can't understand my feelings?"

"Yes," replied Miss Basil, promptly; "I've seen the folly and the vanity of youth in my time."

"Then you might let *me* see the folly and the vanity of it in my time, which is just come," said Joanna, coaxingly.

"Which is just come!" repeated Miss Basil, in dismay, thinking of young Hendall. "Joanna, what *do* you mean by such an expression? But it is no matter what you mean, you silly, thoughtless child; it is my duty to warn you, without fear or favor, that youth is a snare and a delusion!" Miss Basil had great faith in the power of pious song; when nothing else would subdue the recalcitrant Joanna, she sang to her; Joanna might protest in the beginning, but, before the strain was brought to a close, she was dumb and spiritless. So, now, by way of persuading her obdurate young auditor to a better frame of mind, she began immediately to sing, in a fearfully high key:

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's *delusion* given."

Joanna clapped her hands over her ears and frowned.

"Pamela! Pamela!" she cried, "your hymns are doleful, and I hate them; and I love the world, the beautiful, beautiful world; and I am glad that I am young! Everybody, yes, *everybody*, would rather be young than old!"

But this remonstrance only moved Miss Basil to sing the louder, in a voice of nasal melancholy, while Joanna, with her eyes fixed upon the orchard where the sun was shining, and the bees were coming and going among the apple-blossoms, thought, impatiently:

"Such dolefulness may do for people that have had the rheumatism, but it doesn't suit me. How *can* she, in a world of apple-blossoms?"

But a change was about to come over the spirit of her dream. Just as Miss Basil sang the last line of the last verse, Mrs. Basil looked in at the open door, with disapproval written on every line of her calm, handsome face.

"Pamela," said she, in a voice which, though cold, was soft and silvery, contrasting strangely with the discordant tones that had just ceased—"Pamela, excuse me, but really you cannot be aware how very loud your singing is, nor how trying to a person out of health. My nephew cannot bear it; he begs that you will spare him."

Now, Miss Basil was not vain of her voice; indeed, she had no reason to be; but neither was she ashamed of her singing. She sang as she did every thing else, from a sense of duty, and she could not see how any right-minded person could object to a purely religious exercise. However, as she was not disposed to consider young Hendall a right-minded person, she only said:

"I didn't suppose I could be heard upstairs."

She was busying herself with the young man's breakfast all the while, and Mrs. Basil, seeing these preparations going on, was pleased to show, by a nod and a smile, as she withdrew, closing the door behind her, that she was appeased.

If there was any discipline to which Miss Basil resorted, more irksome than another to Joanna, it was this doleful singing, and ordinarily she rejoiced at any interruption;

but now she began to feel, with a bitterness she had never known before, that a stranger had assumed the rule in her old home. This was a feature of the case she had not contemplated when she so complacently acquiesced in the title "master of Basilwood," that Miss Basil had bestowed; and she stood now with angry eyes fixed on the door through which Mrs. Basil had disappeared.

"He's the master here, child, as I told you," said Miss Basil, with a sort of grim satisfaction, for once interpreting Joanna's thoughts aright.

"If you are not to sing, it cannot be helped, I suppose," said Joanna, hoarsely; "but you see if I don't find some way to worry the life out of him!"

"Joanna, Joanna!" said Miss Basil, tremulously, "you show an unchristian spirit. All tribulation is for our good." She was glad to see Joanna in such a frame of mind, but, all the same, she thought it ought to be rebuked.

"I don't believe it!" cried Joanna, recklessly. "It doesn't do *me* good; and you don't like it any better than I do. Why should he be master here?"

"Child, I have explained it to you, time and again," said matter-of-fact Miss Basil. "Your grandfather—"

"I know," interrupted Joanna; "I know all about my grandfather. He wasn't a man to wear out his soul making money, like old Mr. John Hendall; more's the pity for us!"

"It's all the same in the end, child; for all Mr. John Hendall's money, the Hendalls, now, are little better off than ourselves," said Miss Basil, not without a sort of latent satisfaction.

"Basilwood belongs to them," said Joanna, gloomily; "and we can't help it."

"Joanna—we could go away?" said Miss Basil, suddenly. It might be desirable, she thought, to familiarize Joanna with that idea.

"Leave Basilwood? *My* Basilwood, where I have lived all my life!" cried Joanna, turning white at the mere suggestion. "O 'Mela, do you think it *must* come to that?"

"I suppose it must, in time," said Miss Basil, with studied resignation. "You see already that there is an end to my singing. But you should not say '*my* Basilwood,' Joanna, for Basilwood is not, and never will be, yours." It was desirable, Miss Basil thought, to foster the promising enmity that she was

was beginning to entertain toward Mrs. Basil's nephew; she did not take into consideration the dangerous nature of a rebound from such a sentiment.

Joanna burst into tears. "It *shall* be mine!" she sobbed, childishly.

"Joanna," said Miss Basil, who could see but one way by which Joanna could obtain possession of Basilwood, "if you ever say that again, I shall be seriously displeased with you."

"Yes," sobbed Joanna, "it's envy, and hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, 'Mela, I know, to say so; but I can't help it. Never, never, any more, will it be the same place to us. And you took such comfort in your singing, too! I wish he had never come! His old breakfast is getting cold, and I am glad of it; I hope it will disagree with him, I do!"

"Joanna, Joanna!" said Miss Basil, rebukingly. It was very gratifying that Joanna should take a dislike to young Hendall, but she ought not to wish him harm.

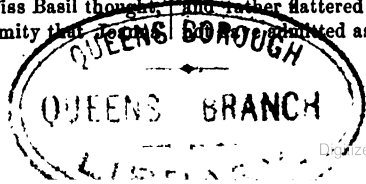
"But I do, 'Mela," persisted Joanna; "and when I feel wicked, you might as well let me enjoy it." With which startling remonstrance she walked out of the room.

"Joanna ought not to indulge such sentiments," Miss Basil said to herself, regretfully; "but it is some satisfaction to know that, after all, I did not sing that hymn in vain."

CHAPTER V.

MRS. BASIL'S CREED.

JOANNA was quite right when she said that "the grandmamma" was pleased with her for inquiring about young Hendall: Mrs. Basil was more than pleased; but Joanna had made her artless inquiries at a propitious moment. There are times when even the most reserved natures crave sympathy, and although Mrs. Basil had no thought of demanding it from any one, least of all from Miss Basil, perhaps, she was sensibly chilled by Miss Basil's indifference; her husband's granddaughter coming immediately afterward, full of eagerness and attention, and showing an admiring appreciation of young Hendall's prowess in the affair of the burglars, soothed and rather flattered her—though she would not have admitted as much, even to herself.



There was, moreover, a simple, childlike directness about Joanna's questions and comments, combined with a marked respect, that seemed to justify the assertion (an assertion that Mrs. Basil had begun to doubt somewhat) that Joanna was but a child; and it is always gratifying to have one's assertions justified, especially when it is desirable to believe in them.

Still, Joanna' could not forever remain a child; and the possibilities of the situation impressed Mrs. Basil, upon reflection, more and more forcibly. Of course, a girl without beauty (for no ray of beauty could Mrs. Basil see in the little sunburned, brown-eyed Joanna), without style, without manner, without accomplishments, almost without education, could have no attractions for Arthur, who, when he married (as marry he must some day—Mrs. Basil had made up her mind to that as a politic step toward fortune), would be guided by that unfailing discretion which characterized all her family. But it was difficult to say what disagreeable complication of affairs might not result from Miss Basil's very natural and, in a general sense, praiseworthy ambition to settle Joanna well in life. Mrs. Basil herself desired to see her husband's granddaughter settled well in life, but not by the sacrifice of her nephew Arthur. So, by way of preventing trouble, she decided to write at once to Miss Hawkesby: not immediately to suggest any thing definite—such abruptness might fail of its object—but simply to open a friendly correspondence that might ultimately lead Miss Hawkesby to give the little Joanna those advantages Mrs. Basil heartily desired to see her husband's granddaughter enjoy. She now reproached herself with having too long neglected cultivating Miss Hawkesby for Joanna's sake, but she hoped it might not yet be too late. If only she could get some clew to the contents and general tone of that letter Miss Basil had received! However, that was out of the question, for she did not wish Miss Basil to know of her writing; and as on that account she could not even ask for Miss Hawkesby's address, she sent her letter inclosed in another to her cousin, Mrs. Stargold, who, she knew, was an intimate friend of Miss Hawkesby, and would forward it to her. This could be managed very easily and naturally, for, of course, it would be proper to inform Mrs. Stargold of Arthur's safe ar-

rival, and Mrs. Basil had good and sufficient reasons for wishing to keep her nephew alive in that lady's interest.

When she had performed these important duties, Mrs. Basil began to devote herself to the cultivation of her nephew's acquaintance; for he was in many respects a stranger to her; and it must be confessed that she found herself a little disappointed in him. He was a handsome young fellow, with frank, easy manners; but evidently he had not the sober solidity of the Hendalls; he was too much disposed to make light of important matters. But he was young, and this disposition she hoped might be overcome in time. In one respect, at least, he certainly was worthy of the name he bore. He had shown himself a hero in the encounter with those burglars; and heroes, Mrs. Basil was proud to remember in the midst of her poverty, had not been wanting in her family. Hendalls, Ruffners, Archers, and Stargolds, had died upon the field of glory; and, though she was far from desiring such an opportunity for Arthur, it filled her heart with exaltation to find that here was another who, upon such a field, could have acquitted himself with honor.

But Arthur had a provoking way of turning up his nose at the whole affair, and calling it a *ridiculus mus*. A "muss" it might be called in a certain sense, perhaps, for there was such a word, Mrs. Basil knew: it meant "scramble;" but what there was ridiculous in so dangerous an encounter she could not see.

"I know, Arthur, that modesty is becoming; but you may carry it so far as to appear affected, you know. And I am sure Cousin Elizabeth would not be pleased to hear the occurrence spoken of as 'ridiculous.'"

Arthur laughed.

"But I assure you, aunt, the story has been very much exaggerated—"

"When you have a wound to show for it?" said Mrs. Basil, reproachfully.

"A mere scratch that I am ashamed of," said Arthur, with impatience. "It was my own pistol, you know, went off through my awkwardness, or carelessness, or stupidity. My fever was on, and a man with third-day ague isn't fit when the fever is on to be handling fire-arms."

"It was all the braver of you, Arthur," said his aunt, admiringly. "Rushing out of a sick-bed, in the dead of night, to con-

front two stalwart ruffians!"—the papers had it so!" (triumphantly).

"Much the papers knew about it!" said Arthur, laughing again. "The rascals scattered at the very first sound of any one stirring, and I never saw them. A child might have driven them away with a rattle. There was no harm done but the bursting of a panel in a little old escritoire, and that was done by the ball out of my own pistol that grazed me as it went off. I don't know how it happened, for it was in the dark; but when they brought a light there I was bleeding from a scratch on my left forearm. And that's all. Nothing, you see, to sound a trumpet for."

"I am sure Cousin Elizabeth doesn't consider it any trifle; she must look upon you as the defender of her life and property."

"Poor old soul, how big her eyes were!" said Arthur, with a hearty chuckle. "It was an awful scene. She'll never get over it. It will move her, surely, to invite some of her numerous impoverished kindred to live with her now. I wonder what possessed her to ask me to stay with her those three days I was compelled to spend in Westport?"

"O Arthur! can't you suppose she would feel an interest in a young kinsman?" said his aunt, in an aggrieved tone. "I consider it a fortunate thing for you, indeed. Cousin Elizabeth may remember you handsomely for the service you rendered her."

"I don't like living on such expectations," said Arthur, making a wry face.

And then Mrs. Basil began to blush for her sentiments, accusing her poverty that ever she had uttered them. Nevertheless, her views remained the same. Had Arthur been as brave in behalf of a beggar, she felt that she would have been none the less proud of him; but she truly thought it a great boon of fortune that he had been given the opportunity to risk his life for an elderly relative who had money to leave; for, of course, he ran a risk—he might have been killed easily enough. All the kindred far and near were paying most assiduous court to the elderly, rich, eccentric Mrs. Stargold; and Mrs. Basil scorned them, one and all, for a set of unblushing legacy-hunters; but it was at least natural that she, who knew how joyless life could be without money, should build some expectations for her nephew upon the opportune service he had rendered the old lady. She wished to believe in the "two

stalwart ruffians" herself, and she was vexed that Arthur would persist in setting them down as naught.

"Independence is all very well, my dear Arthur," said she, impressively; "but it is not wise to carry it too far. Money is a good thing to have; it is indispensable in planting on a large scale, which is the only profitable way in my estimation."

Mrs. Basil had set her heart on having Arthur revive at Basilwood some semblance of that easy, obsolescent Southern life she loved and honored.

"But, if I ever take to planting," said Arthur, "I don't care to do it on a large scale; I would feel quite set up with 'forty acres and a mule.'"

"O Arthur, my dear!" said his aunt, with deep reproach. His ideas on the subject were no more elevated than Pamela's, who was forever harping on "small, mixed crops." Oftener than once, since young Hendall's arrival, had Mrs. Basil been forced to struggle against the unwelcome conviction that he was not altogether what she had fondly hoped to find him. He differed, or appeared to differ, from her on almost every subject where her opinions were strongly fixed; but there was one point on which he contrived, without knowing it, to set her mind at rest.

In one shape or another the all-important idea of match-making seldom fails to take possession of the woman that has a personal interest in any young, unmarried relative; and Mrs. Basil, beginning seriously to question whether her nephew possessed the boasted discretion of a Hendall, was anxious to impress him with sound views in regard to the choice of a wife.

Of course *she* had too much of the characteristics of a Hendall to say any thing to him about the apprehensions his coming had excited; but there were other ways of signifying her wishes to him, and she chose a very roundabout way, indeed; for she believed herself a great diplomatist, and her object was to surprise her nephew's most secret thoughts.

"If ever you should decide upon planting, Arthur, you will find more than forty acres attached to Basilwood."

"And the mule thrown in?" said the incorrigible Arthur.

But this sally Mrs. Basil would not condescend to notice.

"It is good land," she said, "if properly cultivated. It has been known to yield half a bale to the acre. And Basilwood, though so sadly out of repair, is a pleasant place for a gentleman to take his ease in."

"Yes, it is," said Arthur, cordially. "My health is improved since I came."

"I am afraid the life of a civil engineer will never agree with you, my dear boy; and, if you should ever marry, you would find it very inconvenient."

"I don't know," said Arthur. "This house is too large for a poor man. I dream of love in a cottage."

"That sentiment might be excused in a school-girl, but I gave you credit for better sense," replied his aunt, stiffly. She had seen the failure of too many love-matches to put any faith in a cottage with its door for the entrance of that grim guest Poverty, and its window for the exit of that little flimsy, fluttering trifle, Dan Cupid.

"I was merely jesting," said Arthur, with a sudden gravity. "I can't afford to marry."

"You mean to say that you cannot afford to make one of those foolish, cottage-love marriages," said his aunt, quickly. So long as he did not speak lightly, she had hopes of influencing him. "What I wish you to consider is, that with a fine old place like this in possession—and surely, Arthur, you know, as I have always told you, that this place is as much yours now as it would be if I were dead; my chief desire is to see you settled here—"

"Thank you, aunt," said Arthur, with feeling.

"And with means to keep this place up, you might live here like a gentleman of elegant leisure, as your father, and your grandfather, and your great-grandfather, did before you."

"Ay; with means to keep it up," said Arthur.

Mrs. Basil leaned forward and bent a searching look upon her nephew, as he lay stretched out on the lounge; but his eyes were shut, and she could learn nothing from his placid, rather weary-looking countenance. Though she did not believe in the romance of love, she yet hesitated to risk the loss of her influence by declaring openly in favor of marrying for money.

"If I might suggest, Arthur," she said,

slowly, and still studying his half-averted face, "I, who have seen so much more of life than you—money, my dear"—with a deep sigh—"does not make happiness, so it is said, but the want of it is very—inconvenient, to say the least. You ought to make—a judicious marriage."

"A sudden thought strikes me!" cried Arthur, rousing himself. "Aunt, it was not my father, and grandfather, and great-grandfather, who lived here in elegant leisure, as you said, just now—"

"I did not say that," interrupted Mrs. Basil. "Your father and grand—"

"But you said what sounded like it," persisted Arthur, eagerly, "and it has put a notion into my head. What an odd turn of fortune's wheel it was that gives me a claim upon this jolly old place—"

"It was perfectly fair, Arthur; you need not be so excited," interrupted Mrs. Basil again, loftily. "And you need not call the place 'jolly,' as if it were a tavern." Arthur certainly did sometimes speak a language new to her.

"Oh, fair enough in my grandfather, no doubt," answered Arthur; "but a shabby trick of old Dame Fortune to oust the Basils so completely. I say, did not the judge leave some descendant to regard me with envy, hatred, and malice?"

"Arthur!" said Mrs. Basil, with grave displeasure, as she pushed back her chair, "I disapprove of such levity. The judge, my husband, left a granddaughter, an orphan, who has—relatives to care for her." The fact was to be communicated with some caution, she felt.

"Ah, then, if I am to marry," continued Arthur, gayly, inspired by his aunt's indignation, "if I am to marry and live here in elegant leisure, I'll propose for the judge's granddaughter. How lucky that he left a granddaughter for me to marry! Such a marriage should please both the young and the old, for it would be at once romantic and judicious."

"Arthur," said Mrs. Basil, bringing her ivory-headed staff into position, "you will bear in mind that I cannot consider my late husband's granddaughter a subject to build any such supposition upon. She is a mere child."

"If she is a mere child, then," said Arthur, lightly, "of course there is an end of

my romantic and judicious marriage, unless I put it off some years, I suppose?"

Mrs. Basil prudently forbore to notice this suggestion.

"I consider marriage too serious an affair for any kind of jest," said she, drawing herself up with virtuous dignity.

"Perhaps, if I had ever been married, I too should understand that it is no joke," said Arthur the incorrigible.

An unwilling yet irrepressible smile flitted across Mrs. Basil's vexed countenance; but the judge had been an indulgent husband, and she an exemplary wife, and she could afford to smile at a threadbare pleasantry. "Do you mean to say, Arthur," she asked, after a moment's pause, "that you have no definite idea as to what constitutes a judicious marriage? This is, you know, an important matter for a young man to consider."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" replied Arthur, laughing. "Pretty girl, good family, independent fortune, polite education, refinement, style. I can't think it would be reasonable to ask more—or less than this?"

"My dear boy!" said Mrs. Basil, with effusion. "I am not deceived by your jesting tone. I see that I may rely upon the discretion of a Hendall; and if I seemed to doubt your judgment, I beg your pardon."

"Aunt," said Arthur, struck with sudden admiration, "do you know you look just like a fairy godmother, with that killing old staff? Are you going to find me the piece of perfection just described?"

But this was a demand for which Mrs. Basil, who was discussing her nephew's marriage in the abstract, was totally unprepared. However, it gave her an opportunity to make a politic speech. "My dear boy," she said, with a slight, low laugh, "I have no one in view, I assure you; you are your own man, and a Hendall is capable of judging for himself."

"My dear aunt," said Arthur, audaciously, "the sight of you is enough to make a man proud of being a Hendall. Upon my word, you are a handsome old lady; you look as if you were made expressly for diamonds and velvet: and yet you don't need these adventitious aids, for poverty can't impoverish your style, you know. Is it your white hair, or is it your astonishing staff?"

"It is character, my dear boy, character," said Mrs. Basil, unconsciously expanding.

"The Hendalls were always distinguished for character."

Never before had she been so well pleased with her nephew.

CHAPTER VI.

A QUESTION OF MONEY.

It was half-past ten o'clock on a Sunday morning; and, though it was early in April, the sun was shining hot upon the Westport pavements, along which a summer-clad multitude were going to church. Everybody that passed a certain plain but commodious house of yellow brick, with tall, glistening-green pomegranate-bushes in front, and stiff century-plants on each side of the porch, glanced up, and began immediately to talk of burglars; for here lived Mrs. Elizabeth Stargold.

Presently, a lady, richly dressed, tall, elderly, and formidable-looking, stepped out of the throng, opened the iron gate in front of this house, walked up the steps, and rang the bell with a vigorous peal that made itself heard even in the street. While she stood upon the porch, waiting for the door to be opened, the people that passed thought of her, and not of burglars. They bowed and smiled, and she bowed and smiled in return. She seemed to know everybody, and everybody seemed to know her.

"How handsomely she dresses!" said the young ladies.

"And how wonderfully well-preserved she is!" said the old ladies. "Miss Hawkesby must certainly be over sixty."

"But it's easy enough to be well-dressed and well-preserved when one has money," said the middle-aged ladies, sighing.

"She's not so very rich, though," said an old gentleman, one of the kind that knows every thing about everybody; "but she's sharp, you see; knows how to compel a little to go a great way, and dazzle as it goes. Never knew a sharper woman."

"She's a dreadful old dragon," said a very young gentleman, who was probably an unprofitable dangler after the dragon's niece.

"There you go, talking about me, I know," Miss Hawkesby commented to herself; "but you can't one of you say I'm a fool, and you can't one of you say I'm not suitably dressed."

And Miss Hawkesby, who cared nothing for the world's opinion, so long as the world pronounced her clever and well-dressed, passed, thoroughly well satisfied with herself, into the house, and went up-stairs to Mrs. Stargold's room.

A delightful room it was, just in the way of catching the breeze, and furnished with a studious regard to comfort. There was cool matting on the floor, there were dark shades at the windows to shut out the glare, there were lounges, there were easy-chairs, and in one of these, near a window, sat Mrs. Stargold, with a large prayer-book open on her knees.

She was a woman of a delicate *physique*, just the person, apparently, to be shocked irreparably by any sudden fright; yet she was known to be a very determined woman, and because she had lived alone for years she had gained the reputation of being absolutely fearless. But at last it had come to pass, just as everybody expected. Mrs. Stargold's possessions had tempted some desperate wretches, and Mrs. Stargold had received a severe fright: the effect was to be seen in her pale, anxious countenance, and her trembling hands, that had never ceased shaking, it was said, since the night the "two stalwart ruffians," in whom more people than Mrs. Basil liked to believe, entered her house. Mrs. Stargold had been so prostrated by the shock that her devoted relatives the Ruffners had found it necessary to be with her constantly, in order to protect her from the well-meant but ill-advised intrusion of anxious friends. It was not easy to gain access to Mrs. Stargold's presence now, as Miss Hawkesby knew; but, though proudly conscious of the fact that she was more than a match for the Ruffners on any field, she did not choose to try her powers against them. She preferred to use *finesse*. She knew that Mrs. Stargold was too strict a church-goer herself to permit Mrs. and Miss Ruffner to remain away on any account; and she knew that the Ruffners were studious to please "Cousin Elizabeth;" therefore, she chose to make her visit on a Sunday morning, when the Ruffners would surely be out of the way. She didn't mind shocking Mrs. Stargold's sense of propriety. She had always had money enough of her own to enable her to follow the bent of her inclinations in most things, and she was accountable to nobody;

the result was an independence of character, manner, and speech, that sometimes made people open their eyes at Miss Hawkesby, which was a sort of homage Miss Hawkesby enjoyed. She was not abashed, therefore, when Mrs. Stargold stared speechlessly at her as she entered.

"I've taken you by surprise, I know," said she, coolly, "just as I meant to do."

"Olivia," remonstrated Mrs. Stargold, in a thin, tremulous voice, "are you not going to church this morning? Have you forgotten that this is Sunday?"

The two had known each other from girlhood, and they still adhered to the old familiar style of address.

"No," answered Miss Hawkesby—and her voice was neither thin nor tremulous; it was deep and sonorous, with a slight, peculiar hoarseness, and altogether in admirable keeping with her general appearance—"no; look at my dress; do I seem to have forgotten that it is Sunday? But I'm not going to church; when I've something on my mind, what's the use of going to church? I shouldn't be able to fix my attention, so I would better be honest, and remain away."

"But doesn't Anita sing to-day at St. Stephen's?" Mrs. Stargold said, as though she would by any means in her power persuade Miss Hawkesby to her duty. "Sam is gone expressly to hear her."

"I hope he'll enjoy it," said Miss Hawkesby. "Yes, Anita sings to-day at St. Stephen's; but Anita's singing is nothing new to me; in fact, I'm tired of it. I've something on my mind, as I told you, and I must have a talk with you."

"Olivia! On Sunday?"

"Sunday or Monday, my dear, I must have my say out; and you'll find you'll end by hearing me through. You'll have to do it, to be rid of me," said Miss Hawkesby, with the air of a woman who always carried her point. "How do you do to-day, Elizabeth?"

"I'm better to-day," said Mrs. Stargold, wearily; and her voice sounded far away; "but I've had a great shock, Olivia—a great shock."

And she looked at Miss Hawkesby piteously, as though she sought some earthly support against trouble.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Hawkesby, in her deep voice. "You'll get over it if you don't persist in giving up to it."

Mrs. Stargold shook her head.

"I shall never get over it," she said, "never! I've had a summons to yield up my possessions."

In spite of her friend's solemnity, Miss Hawkesby began to laugh, a deep, voluminous laugh, that matched her voice.

"Yes, yes," she said, "I hear that you've seen the lawyers. What a joke! Now did you really, Elizabeth?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Stargold, solemnly; "I've had a warning, Olivia; I must put my affairs in order before I go hence, and am seen no more."

"You've had a warning to take some one to live with you," said Miss Hawkesby. "I'm considered a bold woman, but I wouldn't live alone as you do: it's bad for the spirits. If you had a pretty young girl on your hands, now, to be provided for, you'd have something lively to think about; and it wouldn't be burglars exactly that you would be afraid of—oh, no! it would be impecunious young men. You'd find, with a young girl on your hands, that you must keep alive and wide awake. Why, look at me! I'm a year older than you, and I'm not thinking of making my will; I mean to live as long as possible. Now, I tell you, you would have done much better to send for the doctors, though as a rule I don't believe in doctors—they give physic they would never take, you know. If I were in your place (you know I always speak my mind frankly), I would pack up and leave. What is the use of immuring yourself here forever, when you don't need to economize? Depend upon it, there's nothing like change of scene for keeping fresh. People say, 'Oh, Miss Hawkesby has no local attachments!' but that's a mistake: I have very strong local attachments. That's the reason I never can stay long in any one place, there are so many places I like. You know, last winter I was in Charleston. I was powerfully drawn to the place, I had so many pleasant recollections of Charleston and Charleston people, but I hadn't been there since before the war, and I'll never go again. Before the winter was over I had to come here. I used to know this place years ago, and a nice place it is, this Westport. People here take a little trouble to enjoy themselves: they don't spoil the present by putting on mourning for the future. But I sha'n't be here next winter; it wouldn't be

altogether the same place to me; I must have entire change. As to expense, I've just so much to live on, and I may as well live on it in the way I like. I don't pretend to be rich; I'm poor, in fact, but the worst policy in the world is to seem poor—poor in purse, or poor in spirit. However, that is not the point under discussion. I want to advise you to try change; complete change is what you need."

"That is what the doctors tell me," said Mrs. Stargold, with a sigh.

"Sensible, decidedly," said Miss Hawkesby; "and I hope that you are going to be sensible, too, and follow that advice. It is much better than swallowing physic."

"I am making my preparations," said Mrs. Stargold. "I am going to Middleborough."

"To Middleborough!" exclaimed Miss Hawkesby. She was not often taken by surprise, or, at least, not often betrayed into any expression of surprise; but, in mentioning Middleborough, Mrs. Stargold was coming near the subject that occupied her mind most weightily just now. "I beg your pardon for repeating your words so rudely; I was not prepared for such an announcement. I suppose you go to your cousin's? Is she in the way of entertaining company? I mean is she able to have her friends visit her? In old times we never asked such a question about people living in the country; but times are changed."

"No, I'm not going to my cousin's," said Mrs. Stargold. "She has friends with her every summer, I believe; but I wish to be quiet, I wish to get away from people; I've too much on my mind for company; so I've taken a small house in Middleborough for the summer."

"And what good do you expect from such a change as that?" asked Miss Hawkesby, dryly. "You ought to go to the springs—the White Sulphur, say; it would divert you, and you need diversion."

"No, I don't," said Mrs. Stargold, irritably. "I need quiet."

"And you'll get it by that arrangement," said Miss Hawkesby, who always spoke her mind. "All alone in Middleborough—"

"But I sha'n't be all alone," interrupted Mrs. Stargold, with increasing impatience. "The Ruffners will go with me and stay with me."

"Oh, indeed!" said Miss Hawkesby. She was surprised again, but not enough so to show it. Then, after a pause, she asked, abruptly, "What kind of a person is your cousin Mrs. Basil?"

"Why, she is like other people, I suppose," said Mrs. Stargold. "I haven't seen her in a number of years."

"Then of course you can't know much about her," said Miss Hawkesby. "Even if you've kept up a regular correspondence with her, you can't be said to know her; for people generally don't show themselves as they really are, in their letters.—She wrote me a letter, you know" (this after a pause); "you sent it me yesterday evening."

"Yes; it came inclosed to me; she did not know your address."

"That's not at all surprising, I change it so often," said Miss Hawkesby, with an air of accounting for every thing philosophically. "But the surprising thing is that she should write to me at all. She has some object in view, of course."

"Indeed, Olivia, how should I know what she has in view?" said Mrs. Stargold, peevishly.

"If you studied human nature as I do," continued Miss Hawkesby, who seldom thought it worth while to take offense at what any one said, or at the way in which it was said, "you would understand that a woman who never saw me wouldn't care to be telling me, merely for the purpose of giving me pleasure, that my niece Joanna is growing to be a tall girl, and developing many fine traits of character." And, oh, what a deal of scorn! didn't it look beautiful in the contempt and anger of her lip?

"I didn't know you had a niece Joanna," said Mrs. Stargold, with faint interest.

"Anita's half-sister," explained Miss Hawkesby. "A regular Basil. I never saw the child but once. When I was on a visit to Eastcliffe her father brought her to see me. Eastcliffe, you know, is only about thirty miles from Middleborough, and it is one place I never have desired to see again, and believe my niece Joanna may have had something to do with my distaste for the place. She was about two years old, and she lamented incessantly for somebody she called 'Mela.' I was glad when she went away. A regular Basil. Now Anita is all Hawkesby; she does not resemble me personally, but

she is all Hawkesby. I couldn't take both, so, very naturally, I took Anita. Now, there is a Miss Basil, a cousin of old Judge Basil's, who ought to be willing to do every thing in her power for Joanna, for the old judge was the best of friends to her."

"I'm sure I don't know any thing about it, Olivia," said Mrs. Stargold, helplessly, as if she feared a direct attack; for Miss Hawkesby, warming with her subject, had a threatening air.

"But I do, you see," said Miss Hawkesby. "People who go about the world as I do, are pretty sure to hear every thing about everybody, if they take care to keep their ears open and their mouths shut. Now I've heard some dark hints as to Miss Basil's past, and I know that she owes Judge Basil a debt she may be thankful enough to repay to his granddaughter. Mrs. Basil need not make it a reproach to me that Miss Basil is not capable of giving Joanna the highest polish. Dear me! Haven't I my hands full with Anita? If Anita were to marry, indeed—but look at the girls who marry now! What sort of matches do they make? Now I tell Anita there is no manner of sense in marrying a poor man."

"People do often marry very recklessly," said Mrs. Stargold, with a sigh; "but I suppose it is possible to be happy without money—"

"No, it isn't," said Miss Hawkesby.

"Wealth is a great burden," sighed Mrs. Stargold.

"You say that only because you are afraid of robbers," said Miss Hawkesby.

"No," replied Mrs. Stargold, nervously, "no, no; I think not. But it is a great responsibility—when, for instance, you must decide who is the right person to inherit your wealth."

She looked appealingly at Miss Hawkesby, as though she would fain have had her counsel.

"Well, and haven't you decided that point yet?" asked Miss Hawkesby, coolly.

"No," said Mrs. Stargold, uneasily. "I want light on the subject—I want light."

"I suppose it was to have light on the subject that you invited young Hendall here?" asked Miss Hawkesby, with a searching look.

"Perhaps it was," said Mrs. Stargold, leaning her head on her hand, and looking

apparently through and beyond Miss Hawkesby, into infinite space. "The ways of Providence are past finding out. For more than a quarter of a century I have enjoyed the wealth that was my poor brother's; and how do I know what sore need has troubled some poor soul for lack of that very money?"

"Elizabeth!" said Miss Hawkesby, rising impatiently, "positively you are growing morbid, and the sooner you have a change, the better. Who has a better right to Francis Hendall's money than you? Weren't you his own sister? Now, don't you be a goose and leave your money to some asylum or other. Leave it to some of your relations; they are all nice people."

"I mean to leave it to my relations," said Mrs. Stargold, with a mysterious air.

"That's sensible," said Miss Hawkesby; "but don't go, now, and fancy that you need be making your relations rich before you die. Nobody will ever thank you for such stupid generosity as that."

"I must do my duty," said Mrs. Stargold, plaintively.

Miss Hawkesby stared at her. "Your duty," said she, severely, "evidently is to have a change as speedily as possible. When do you go?"

"Not before May, I think."

"Don't put off going; I tell you, you need a change. Middleborough is a nice place, I'm told, and I know some people there: Mrs. Carl Tomkins—I met her at the White Sulphur summer before last—and Mrs. Paul Caruthers, and a Miss Caruthers; I didn't think much of her"—which, indeed, was patent enough from that withering indefinite article. "I met *them* at Sewanee last year."

Then Miss Hawkesby sat silent a few moments, studiously contemplating Mrs. Stargold. "Elizabeth is like all old women with money to leave," she said to herself. "Partly she doesn't wish any one to know what she will do with her property, and partly she doesn't herself know what she will do with it."

"Well," she said, presently, as she rose to go, "I had rather decided that Mrs. Basil's letter need not be answered; but I feel more amiable since expressing my mind to you, and I think now I'll write and tell her that I'm glad to hear my niece Joanna is growing tall—I'm tall myself—and that it is a great satisfaction to know that she is de-

veloping fine traits of character; but that I cannot help Miss Basil's lack of polish."

And she did write in just such a strain; but Mrs. Basil's uneasiness had been lulled to rest by Arthur before this letter reached her, and its tone of indifference did not disturb her. She could not now be troubled about Joanna, and it was long before she thought again of writing to Miss Hawkesby.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHANCE MEETING.

For some days the weather had been showery at Basilwood, and young Hendall, accustomed of late to an out-door life, began to weary of the house, and to weary still more, it must be confessed, of his aunt. His first thought, therefore, when he saw the sun shine out, was to escape.

"I think," he mused aloud, "I will spend the morning in the garden."

"No, Arthur," said Mrs. Basil, as though she were speaking to a child, "the garden is damp, and you are not well. Besides, people don't spend whole mornings in a garden merely for pleasure."

"Very stupid of people, then," said Arthur. "Now I like the looks of this old garden, I need fresh air, and I'll have out my camp-stool, and spend the morning there."

"Oh, very well, Arthur," said Mrs. Basil, her head rather higher than usual; "if you wish to have another chill. But I'm sure Dr. Garnet wouldn't advise it. And you must excuse me from accompanying you; I never go out in the morning, it is damp. But I'll order your camp-stool carried out, if you are determined to have your own imprudent way."

"Thank you, aunt," said Arthur, "I can wait upon myself."

But this Mrs. Basil would not permit him to do. Old Thurston, summoned in haste from his work, came in, grimy and grumbling, shouldered the camp-stool, and, limping ostentatiously, led the way to the desired spot, at the end of a broad walk, where the shadow of a grape-trellis made a charming tracery on the gravel.

The old Jack-at-all-trades, being, as usual, behindhand in some all-important job, was not pleased to be called upon to lug chairs

out of the house, when there were benches under the scuppernong arbor, and seats in the little alcove where the oleanders grew, if people must sit out-of-doors. He decided in his own mind that this young man was "no 'count, and given to high airs;" but he quickly changed his opinion, when, as he put down the camp-stool, he perceived that Arthur had taken out his pocket-book. Nothing conciliated old Thurston like a tender of fractional currency.

"It's not roomatiz that disjoints you," he remarked, encouragingly, with a pretense of not observing the pocket-book.

"Not much," said Arthur, extending his hand, & motion for which old Thurston, with all his seeming unconcern, was on the alert.

"Thank you kindly, sir," said he, bowing idolatrously. "It used to be silver; but times is changed. If it isn't roomatiz, you'll get over it. I wish you may marry rich." No better wish could old Thurston devise for any man.

"Marry rich," repeated Arthur, as the old negro moved away. "Twice in as many days has this wisdom of the aged been thrust upon me."

The garden was a wilderness of bloom and verdure; the breeze came laden with the scent of apple-blossoms and the lulling murmur of bees; and the young man, abandoned to the soothing languor of the scene, hardly appreciated the perfect calm of his retreat, until it was disturbed by the discordant scream of a Guinea-hen, mingled with occasional cries of "Shoo, shoo!" and followed by the patter of feet in rapid pursuit.

Young Hendall, weakened by illness, was in that uncertain state when the veriest trifle becomes an intolerable burden, but when, also, the simplest diversion may prove a benefit. He glanced around with a look of helpless exasperation, and as the Guinea-hen, with its peculiar, swaying gait, and half-suppressed cry, emerged from the shelter of one of the long alleys, he threw his pocket-knife with angry violence at the frightened creature, which, squalling wildly, fled with accelerated speed.

The next instant he started to his feet in surprise, for immediately in front of him stood the Guinea-hen's breathless pursuer, a sun-browned, thin-visaged little maiden; with scarcely a trait of beauty, save the large, dark, unfathomable eyes, that, in spite of

their direct and fearless glances, seemed to reveal nothing of the young soul that looked through them; only the mobile mouth, with its thin and flexible scarlet lips, disclosing the white but slightly irregular teeth, seemed to contradict the steadfast eyes, and proclaim the impetuosity and vehemence of her nature.

The two confronted each other for a few seconds, silent with embarrassment. Arthur Hendall could not identify this apparition with Judge Basil's granddaughter, for he had not supposed that the "child" of whom his aunt spoke lived at Basilwood; neither could he believe that this delicately-formed, graceful little creature belonged to that Griswold family, concerning whom he had heard quite enough from Mrs. Basil to satisfy him that they were people of an altogether different type from this.

But Joanna, though she had never seen this young man before, knew perfectly well who he was; he was the *master of Basilwood*; and at the thought the tears rose up and almost overcame her.

"Would you — would you, then, have killed my Guinea-hen?" she faltered, clasping her thin, brown hands with nervous force.

The blood rushed to Arthur Hendall's handsome face, and he said, quite contritely: "I beg your pardon; but I am sick and cross."

Now, Joanna had ceased to consider this young gentleman as a hero ever since Miss Basil had been forbidden to sing. She looked upon him as an intruder and a tyrant, and if she had not yet made the attempt to "worry the life out of him," it was simply because she had not found out how to do so without compromising her dignity; and Mrs. Basil herself was not more tender on that point than this little Joanna.

"I suppose it is because you are sick and cross, then, that you put a stop to the singing?" she asked, with a comical fierceness.

"Was it *you* that sang?" Arthur asked, incredulously.

Joanna shrugged her shoulders with impatience—a trick she had inherited from her French ancestry.

"I can't sing like that," she said, with unconscious satire.

"It was atrocious," said Arthur, laugh-

ing slightly, and rising as he spoke, for he saw that this little oddity was neither to be considered a rustic nor yet a child.

"No matter," retorted Joanna, who could not deny that charge; "it is the only—solace Pamela has when I—aggravate her."

Young Hendall felt instinctively that it would not do to laugh.

"And has the singing really ceased?" he asked, gravely. "Does she sing no more, this Pamela, whoever she may be?"

"Of course it has stopped at *your* command, Mr. Arthur Hendall," said Joanna, with bitter emphasis.

At the sound of his own name, Arthur started. Who could this girl be that seemed to know him so well? And who was this Pamela whose cause she so warmly espoused?

"It was an outrageous noise," he said, with the natural combativeness of a young man who would be always right. "You yourself must acknowledge that it was fearfully shrill?"

"But it hurt her feelings," said Joanna, with the natural evasiveness of a woman who will not be convinced—"I know it hurt her feelings, though she did not say a word."

"Did it hurt your feelings, too?" asked Arthur, with interest.

"It made me very angry!" said Joanna, with a sudden rush of color. "Before that I was sorry for you; but now, indeed—"

"Pray tell Pamela, then, that I beg she will begin to sing again," said Arthur, good-naturedly, seeing that Joanna did not intend to finish her sentence.

Contrary to his expectation, however, this did not conciliate Joanna; she resented this permission as a tyrant's condescension. With a dignity that would have done honor to Mrs. Basil herself, she answered:

"Pamela is Miss Basil; I alone have the right to call her Pamela; and I decline to deliver your message."

Young Hendall, who could not understand the secret of Joanna's indignation, naturally resented being thus snubbed.

"It is not of the slightest importance," he said, coldly, and sat down with an air of putting a peremptory end to the interview.

Joanna immediately turned away with a miserable sense of defeat.

"He'll usurp the garden next," she said to herself, "and then what is to become of

me? I shall be banished—banished! I wish, oh, I do wish I could sing like Pamela! I'd hide in the thickets, and terrify his very soul!"

At this stage of her angry soliloquy she had reached the little alcove where the oleanthers grew, and here she sat down and burst into a passion of weeping; but she could hardly have explained, even to herself, the secret of her tears. It was not that she felt herself banished from the garden, for in her heart she knew that she did not mean to abandon one of her favorite haunts, though she should stumble upon the usurper at every step; it was not that she could not sing like Pamela, for she was very, very far from desiring that shrill accomplishment, and farther still from any intention of imperiling her dignity by singing in the thickets; and certainly it was not because Mr. Arthur Hendall had thrown his knife at her Guinea-hen, for she had quite forgotten that; neither was it because the sight of the master of Basilwood had been too much for her. No, if the truth must be told, Joanna wept because she was painfully conscious of her short and ill-setting skirts! Ah, had she *glided* down those garden-walks in trailing draperies, like the grand ladies she read of, or even like that odious Miss Ruffner, how differently "the grand-mamma's" nephew might have regarded her! For Joanna had seen in young Hendall something more than the master of Basilwood: she had seen in him a finished young gentleman of the great world; and she—her skirts didn't set well; she didn't understand gores, and neither did Pamela.

But, had Joanna appeared to young Hendall in all the glory of the latest mode, he doubtless would have beat a hasty retreat, for he was in no mood to exchange compliments with a lady of fashion. Joanna, in her faded brown linen, with her straw hat, which the sun and wind had tanned, hanging half off her graceful head, and her crisp, sun-burned hair, blown in picturesque confusion about a face that glowed like a sun-ripened peach, was an apparition far more agreeable to him just then. She suited the old garden so well, he thought, that, ignorant who she might be, he could have fancied her, poetic youth that he was, an oread or a hamadryad, except that there was so much of the malice of a clever child about her. His first question on entering the house was:

"Aunt, what is that little brown thing running wild about the garden?"

"Indeed, Arthur, I seldom go into the garden now, it is so ill-kept of late," answered Mrs. Basil, glancing up, with a barely audible sigh, from the slipper she had undertaken to embroider for him. "Is it not the weed they call 'pusley?'—for, naturally, she thought that he was asking a botanical question.

Arthur laughed.

"No, that is not her name, I am sure," said he. "I am not speaking of a weed; I mean that queer little brown girl, with the brown dress, like a furniture-cover, you know?" (If Joanna had heard that!)

"Oh," said Mrs. Basil, with as much indifference as she could command, and pausing deliberately to pick out a false stitch, and telling herself again that her nephew had a great deal of levity for a Hendall. "You must excuse my dullness; but it was not my fault that I did not understand you," she said, coldly, when she had rectified the mistake in her work. "I suppose you must mean the little Joanna, Judge Basil's granddaughter."

"But you said that Judge Basil's granddaughter is a child?" objected Arthur, with marked surprise.

"She *is* a child," reiterated Mrs. Basil, decisively. On that point she was firm.

"And why did you not tell me that she lives here?" asked Arthur, suspiciously.

"Why should I boast of my good deeds?" replied Mrs. Basil, with comfortable pride. "Surely, my husband's granddaughter may have a home at Basilwood as long as I live?"

"Surely, as long as she likes, poor little thing!" exclaimed Arthur, with ready sympathy.

"But, understand, Arthur, that *I* am not responsible for her training and conduct. Miss Basil, the judge's cousin, has had exclusive charge of her from her infancy, and Miss Basil is—simply my house-keeper. I fear that she is no very judicious guardian for the child; but that, of course, is not my affair." And Mrs. Basil looked at her nephew as if she wished to add, "nor yours."

"And this Miss Basil, your house-keeper, is she as fiendish as her singing?"

"Arthur!" said Mrs. Basil, reprovingly, "you should not employ such expressions.

Miss Basil's voice is shrill, I know; she herself is a plain, inoffensive creature."

"I hope she is good to Joanna," said Arthur.

"That need not concern you," said his aunt, coldly. "Though I may state, *en passant*" (how pleasant it was to air her colloquial French!), "that *I* should resolutely discountenance any unfairness to the child; she is the judge my husband's granddaughter. But what does very naturally concern you, Arthur, is this: I have a letter from Jane Ruffner. She was to have spent part of the summer with me; but she writes, now, that she will be with Mrs. Stargold, who has taken a house here in Middleborough for the summer."

"I am heartily sorry to hear it," said Arthur, frowning. "I shall have to be capering over there, I suppose, to pay my respects?"

"I don't know what you mean by 'capering over there;'¹ I suppose you will ride over and call, as a gentleman should," said Mrs. Basil, in an injured tone; but she didn't picture to herself how a Hendall, young and handsome, must look mounted on bony old Black Hawk, the solitary horse of the Basilwood stables. "I don't know," she continued, in the same aggrieved manner—"I'm sure I don't know why my cousin couldn't come to me. I wrote and asked her; but I suppose she is under Jane Ruffner's direction."

"You couldn't have made the old lady comfortable," said Arthur, bluntly; "which I consider a fortunate circumstance, myself, for, of all regular bores, our estimable cousin is the chief."

"Arthur!" said Mrs. Basil, with displeasure. "I wonder at you; I do, indeed. You should not permit yourself to speak so disrespectfully of your own relations. The habit will grow upon you, and betray you, some day, to your cost. For prudence' sake, as you hope to stand well with Mrs. Stargold, whose ability to—*to serve you* is not to be despised, pray be more guarded in your speech."

"What possesses the old soul to come to Middleborough, of all places?" said Arthur, with what his aunt considered hopeful interest.

"I consider it a very significant step," said she, with an air of mystery. "This is probably her last summer on earth; poor

Cousin Elizabeth, by all accounts, is failing rapidly. The Ruffners are to be with her—did I tell you?"

"The three?" said Arthur. "That's a good arrangement. Sam is such a good-natured fellow, he can do all the errands; old Jane can do the honors, and Mrs. Ruffner can gather entertaining gossip. I don't think Cousin Elizabeth will feel the want of my attentions."

"She would have been much better under *my* roof," said Mrs. Basil, despondently. "But don't say 'old Jane,' my dear Arthur; she is your third cousin, and, with all her faults, a very imposing woman. As to Mrs. Ruffner, she is allied to us only by marriage, and is indeed, as you say, given to gossip; I trust, therefore, that you will be discreet in your speech."

Arthur was silent; perhaps he felt that his aunt's advice was good.

"You think me a mercenary old woman, my dear," Mrs. Basil said, with a sad smile, seeing that he would not speak. "But you are yet full of the arrogance of youth; you think the world's your oyster now, and you expect to open it with your sword; when you're older, you'll know better. Money is a good thing to have."

"Oh, I understand you, aunt," said Arthur, "and I'm much obliged to you, you know. Of course, I should like some of Mrs. Stargold's money, but I—can't bow and cringe for it, I can't."

"My dear, no!" said Mrs. Basil, hastily. She would fain have shown herself indifferent to Mrs. Stargold's wealth; but, alas! poverty forbade; or so, at least, she excused herself to herself. "I would not see you 'bow and cringe;' pray don't use such language, Arthur. But I would not have you slight your opportunities. To say nothing of the service you rendered"—Arthur made an impatient movement, but his aunt would not notice it—"you have a much nearer claim than the Ruffners upon Mrs. Stargold. Her father, George Hendall he was, and the Ruffners' grandmother were only cousins; but George Hendall was your grandfather's half-brother.—Why do you laugh, Arthur? I'm sure it's creditable to understand one's family connection."

"But where are the long-deceased Stargold's relations?" asked Arthur. "Are you going to leave them out of the account?"

"There are none," said Mrs. Basil, with satisfaction. "Besides, far the greater part of Mrs. Stargold's wealth, you know, was inherited from her brother, Francis Hendall; and you are the last of the name, Arthur; I'm sure that's something in your favor."

"Francis Hendall—was he not reputed a black sheep?" asked Arthur, with a grimace. "Perhaps my bearing the name may be rather a disadvantage to me."

"You seem determined to put yourself at a disadvantage, Arthur," said his aunt, with a sigh that was half regret and half admiration. She liked high-toned sentiments, she really believed, better than money. "Francis Hendall has been dead a quarter of a century. I don't think we should recall his faults."

"I know nothing of his faults," said Arthur, bluntly; "and care still less."

"He was—*erratic*," said Mrs. Basil, with an air as though the delicate word covered a multitude of sins; "and we have agreed in the family never to discuss him."

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANGE OF HEART.

THE little Joanna's tears were bitter enough while they lasted; but, at the age of seventeen, with no weightier cause for grief than short, ill-setting skirts, one does not weep long, and soon she wiped her eyes and went in search of Pamela. She still retained the childish habit of following Miss Basil about in her daily avocations, notwithstanding the dawning consciousness that she had begun to outgrow the somewhat restricted intelligence of her prosaic cousin.

She found the object of her search in the dairy, the products of which, under Miss Basil's thrifty management, added a very acceptable fraction to Mrs. Basil's small income. But Joanna made no offer of assistance, not because she had not the will to be useful, but because her thoughts were so busy with other subjects.

"Pamela," said she, gravely, "don't you wish you were rich?"—a question not at all *à propos*, it would seem, to the churn that Miss Basil was filling.

"Such wishes are but waste of time, child," said Miss Basil. "A little reflection

would show you that they lead to discontent."

"But I don't feel like reflecting," said Joanna, moving about recklessly; "I feel like wishing. Pamela, if somebody were to leave you a great deal of money, what would you do?"

"There is nobody to leave me any money," said Miss Basil, with decision.

"But if—if?" persisted Joanna.

"It is dangerous to tamper with 'ifs,'" said Miss Basil, sententiously. "Learn contentment, child."

"I know what I would do," said Joanna, utterly regardless of the sound advice; "I'd have dresses like the ladies in the fashion-plates, and sit under the apple-trees, and read 'Quentin Durward' all day long."

"And spoil your fine clothes, besides wasting your time," said Miss Basil, grimly. "Don't be silly, Joanna; youth is a time of delusion, and, unless you accept my experience—"

"O Pamela! I wish you wouldn't!" Joanna interrupted, with a deprecating gesture. "Can't you understand that your experience would fit me about as well as your old shoes?"

It is altogether vain for Age to hope that Youth will blindly accept the wisdom so carefully sifted from the chaff of life; for it is the chaff that shines so attractively to eyes not yet dimmed by care and sorrow. But this Miss Basil could not understand. She heard Joanna with amazement, not unmingled with indignation; but a vague intuition of her inability to cope with this ardent young spirit in its incipient struggle against the trammels of its narrow life withheld her from hazarding a direct comment.

"Joanna," she said, authoritatively, after a startled look of a moment's duration, "there are a dozen towels in the linen-press to be hemmed; go hem them. It is half-past ten o'clock; you've been idle long enough."

It was not wisdom that actuated Miss Basil; she spoke in sheer desperation; but she could not have chosen a more effectual method of closing the debate. Much as Joanna fretted at her cousin's obtuseness of imagination, she had no thought of defiance. She went obediently for the towels; but she did not return with them to the dairy.

"It is not so very bad to hem towels," she said, with a little sigh, as she addressed herself to her task, "but it is dreadful to

hem one's soul down according to precept and example. Pamela does not understand me."

This was exactly the conclusion at which Miss Basil herself had arrived.

"Mercy guide us!" she cried, devoutly, clasping her head with her hands when Joanna had left her; "the child sets me wild! I don't understand her. To think that, after all my drilling in the catechism that I've never spared, and all the texts of Scripture that I've stored her mind with, she should be so given to the vanities of dress! And I always give her good advice, the very best advice, if she would only heed it. What can the child want more?"

But the little Joanna wanted sympathy, that subtle balm, the nature of which Miss Basil, kind and pitiful though she was in all cases of physical suffering, could not understand where only tastes and fancies were concerned.

And thus it had come to pass that Joanna had made to herself a friend of the old garden. To flit like a butterfly from one sunlit alley to another was a pastime she could not forego, though a lion barred the way. Indeed, to her daring nature, any risk to be run, any peril to be overcome, rendered any undertaking but the more irresistible. Not that she looked upon Arthur Hendall as a lion, however. Had she now been disposed to draw a comparison from the animal kingdom, she would hardly have employed the king of beasts as she had done, so much to Miss Basil's annoyance, the morning of young Hendall's arrival. She refused to recognize in this tyrant and usurper any obstacle to her daily pleasure; she assured herself that she neither hoped nor feared to meet him—and so she continued to tend assiduously the flower-borders that nobody else at Basilwood cared for.

And, of course, she met young Hendall; he had little else to do just now but stroll about at his pleasure; and, however she might avoid him, she was sure to encounter him at some unexpected turn of those extensive grounds, and he was sure to smile and bow, and wish her good-morning in a manner well calculated to efface her prejudice. If she rested in some shady corner the better to escape him, he invariably discovered her hiding-place—quite accidentally, of course. If ever a young man and a maiden, each on a

separate course, stray down "blossoming ways," however spacious the garden, their steps inevitably converge, and that old and charming *commedia a soggetto* of "Cupid among the Roses" is sure to be played again, for the actors need no prompting.

Joanna had met young Hendall morning after morning in the wide gravel-walks, and had always passed him abruptly and defiantly, in spite of his ingratiating salutation; but one morning he surprised her in a remote nook, seated at the foot of a half-ruined vase of brickwork, in which some degenerate specimens of verbena were struggling for existence.

"A pleasant morning to you, little Joanna," he said, smiling down benignly upon her from his superior height.

"Good-morning," answered the little Joanna, with a sudden flush, and a tumult in her ears that her beating heart did make. It was the first time "the grandmamma's nephew" had addressed her by name; and it seemed to her as though he had suddenly overleaped a great barrier. She had resented as an unwarrantable familiarity his calling Miss Basil "Pamela;" but it could not occur to her to resent the use of her own name in that way, for, as every one called her "the little Joanna," it seemed perfectly natural that he also should address her thus; yet, coming from him, the sound of her own name was so unexpected that for the moment it deprived her of the power, almost of the wish, to retreat. She was mending the handle of a large willow-basket with a piece of faded ribbon, and she bent over her task now with fingers trembling visibly.

"Give me that," said Arthur, laying violent hands upon the basket; "I'll mend it for you."

"No, no, no!" said Joanna, excitedly, and clinging to the basket as though it were an ægis; "I say no! I must be going!"

"You always 'go,'" said the young man, reproachfully. "I think you might sometimes stay to amuse me; it is so stupid."

Joanna looked at him askance. The idea that this young gentleman, who had seen the world, could be amused by her, was preposterous.

"But I must go," said she, decidedly. "Pamela has given me something to do."

"Always that dreadful 'Pamela!'" said Arthur, impatiently.

"I have told you," corrected Joanna, with dignity, "that she is *Miss Basil*."

"But that is so indefinite," objected Arthur; "and I have a devouring curiosity about you Basils."

"To be in the house all this time, and not know who Pamela is!" said Joanna, with a little toss of indignation.

"How should I know when you hold yourselves always aloof?" said Arthur, apologetically.

Joanna colored.

"We breakfast and dine very early," said she. "It is very—*plebeian*, I know; but—it is convenient and better for the health. Pamela does not approve of a late breakfast."

"Which is a great pity," said Arthur; "for my aunt and I do not approve of an early one. People have a chance of becoming sociable when they take their meals together. I might have learned the whole family history of the Basils by this time, and no doubt I should have been very much entertained; but, as it is, I am still an ignorant stranger, and dreadfully bored for lack of a little enlivenment."

"Oh!" said Joanna; but the brief monosyllable expressed a volume. She knew very little of the family history of the Basils, except that they were of French extraction, and she shrank from betraying her ignorance of her kindred to a young man who was known to be, in the grandmamma's phrase, "so very well connected." She was anxious to do justice to her position as *the young lady of the Basil family*, but her inexperience in the ways of society embarrassed her not a little. She readily perceived that there was a certain tone about young Hendall quite different from any thing she had ever studied in the way of "manners;" but, ready as she was, she could not imitate it upon the spur of the moment; and, not knowing what reply to make to his bantering speech, she only said "Oh!" rather despairingly, and under her breath, as it were. Then, after what seemed to her a fearfully long pause, she added, with sudden resolution, "But I must go!" and smothered a little sigh, as she rose. Her conscience smote her for relenting, or wishing to relent, toward this tyrant and usurper.

"And I must go with you," said Arthur.

"Why?" asked Joanna, rather startled.

"*Pour me dischnuyer*," he said, not unwilling to dazzle and mystify this simple maiden, like the very young man that he was; but for his punishment, Joanna, with a radiant smile, exclaimed:

"Oh, I understand you! I know French, for my ancestors, you see, were French—and so I thought it a shame not to know their language. Pamela could not have me regularly instructed; it was—inconvenient; so I learned by myself as well as I could, until last summer there came a little old French lady to board in that brick-house—did you notice it, a little way back from the road as you come out from town? Nobody lives there now; but the people that did live there took this poor French lady to board. She was an invalid, and Pamela sent her fruit every day—Pamela is very good to the sick, you know. Well, I carried the fruit myself, and the dear old madame was very kind. From her I—acquired the true accent; and, Mr. Hendall," she added, complacently, "I think your accent is very good."

If one had suddenly struck him, Arthur could not have been more thoroughly astounded. It was no small surprise to find that this little rustic knew French, and had learned it, one might almost say, by sheer force of will; but the patronizing tone in which she expressed her flattering opinion of his accent was hard on his vanity. Yet Joanna had not meant to be patronizing. She spoke nothing but the simple truth when she said that she knew French; and, as she was neither shy nor vain, she had not hesitated to pronounce, in her straightforward way, what she felt was a correct as well as a favorable judgment. But young Hendall was, for a brief moment, deprived of the power of speech. He walked by her side in silence, undetermined whether to accompany her or to turn back; for he began to fear that he should like the little Joanna none the better for her knowledge of French. However, as she manifested no disposition to make a display of her hard-won accomplishment, he took courage, and asked (in English) what she was going to do with her basket.

"I am going to gather roses for Pamela."

"But what can she mean to do with that great basketful? Is she going to give a May-party?"

"Oh, no," Joanna answered, with a sigh

and a smile, as if divided between admiration and regret; "Pamela would not waste her time on a May-party, I'm afraid. You see, she—*utilizes* every thing," she continued, in an explanatory manner; "for she is a—an extraordinary manager. She doesn't like to see any thing wasted. Now, these roses, they bloom, and wither, and—and—are *exhaled* away to no profit; so this year Pamela is going to try an experiment. She is always ready for an experiment, and she is almost always successful. She has an excellent recipe for making rose-water, and that is what she wants with the roses."

"And then what will she do with so much rose-water?" Arthur asked.

"Oh, it is good for many things," said Joanna; "and she will have some to sell. She wouldn't take the trouble if she didn't think it would *pay*."

"A remarkable woman Miss Basil must be," said Arthur. "She makes every edge cut, doesn't she?"

"I don't know what you mean," Joanna answered, coloring high. "She *must* be managing, because, you know, we are not rich. Basilwood"—she stopped suddenly, overpowered by emotion.

Young Hendall understood her without further words. "Basilwood shall always be your home, always," he said, with warmth. "My aunt wishes you to understand that—and so do I."

"Mine and 'Mela's? We shall never have to go away?" Joanna asked, eagerly.

"Never on our account, be sure," answered Arthur.

Joanna did not attempt to express her surprise and gratitude in any way. She raised her hand furtively to brush away a tear, and then said, very quietly, but with a sigh in which a great weight was lifted from her heart:

"It is a tangled place where the roses grow. I think you had better not come. The grandmamma told Pamela that the doctor says you are to keep very quiet and not exert yourself." But these simple words, expressed with genuine feeling, bore testimony to the total change her sentiments toward the tyrant and usurper had now undergone.

"I sha'n't exert myself to obey him," said Arthur. "I like roses entirely too well." And he followed Joanna to the tangled spot where the roses grew—rather, however, be-

cause Joanna interested him than because he cared so much for the flowers.

And Joanna, innocently glad to have him go with her, said nothing further to discourage him.

CHAPTER IX.

ROSES HAVE THORNS.

"I do not like roses so very much," said Joanna, cautiously putting aside the interwoven branches. "I never did; they have such thorns. They tear my clothes and scratch my fingers. But I do love apple-blossoms. They are roses without thorns, and their perfume is—*is intoxicating*. When I inhale the odor of apple-blossoms, I can't help fancying how pleasant it would be to live in a world of apple-blossoms; for then one might be in the sunshine all day, and flutter in the wind, and never, never work! And yet," she added, penitently, "Pamela says work is a blessing."

"A dreadful task-mistress Pamela must be," said Arthur.

Joanna had begun to gather the roses, clipping them rapidly with a pair of shears, and dropping them into the basket which she had placed upon the ground.

"No," she answered, simply; "it is that I am so very idle." She did not remind Arthur now that he should not call Miss Basil "Pamela."

"But you do not realize that you are now in the very apple-blossom world you were wishing for," said Arthur, waving his hand oratorically. "Why should you not sometimes be idle in order to enjoy it? Some day you will find it gone forever; even now, it is slipping from you day by day."

Joanna colored vividly, dropped her shears, and clasped her hands with a sigh.

"Ah, me!" she said, "when I speak of my fancies to Pamela, she tells me not to be silly; but you seem to understand me. I think it must be, perhaps, because you are yet in the apple-blossom world yourself?"

Arthur was pleased. A compliment of this nature was far more gratifying to his vanity than the just commendation she had passed upon his French; for that praise which implies the bestower's right to sit in judgment on our acquirements is rarely so acceptable as the involuntary recognition of some

natural quality, however trivial, that compels admiration. If Arthur had felt humiliated by the tone of calm superiority, unconscious though it was, in which Joanna had expressed her favorable opinion of his French accent, he now felt soothed by the artless delight she showed at his commentary on her childish wish. It is the privilege of human nature to find consolation in trifles; and young Hendall was not a little elated by the flattering conceit that he possessed the rare power of interpreting the human heart.

But he did not feel obliged to exercise his gift of interpretation upon his own heart—else might he have asked himself what magic had suddenly transformed this little Joanna from an amusing child to a study of absorbing interest? He vexed his vanity with no such question; not being wise beyond his years, he only congratulated himself upon the prospect of an agreeable relief to the monotony of Basilwood, where, for the present, he was compelled to stay. Yet he would have scorned the suggestion that a mere desire to escape *ennui* influenced his determination to develop the dormant powers of this fledgling of the Basilwood thickets. It was but ordinary benevolence, he told himself, to wish to improve, by his conversation and advice, this little, untaught girl, thrown on his hands as it were, to whom, while Fortune had been adverse, Nature had been prodigal, if only in bestowing upon her so keen a perceptive faculty. How should it occur to him, in the full tide of gratified vanity, that the perceptive faculty can discern defects as well as merits? Arthur Hendall was very young.

And Joanna, clipping the roses heedlessly, thought, with exultation, that at last some one heard her with indulgence, and understood her. And in her simplicity she asked her heart why it was that Pamela, who, doubtless, loved her well, could not enter into the spirit of her harmless fancies as this stranger did? It was as though some invisible hand had lifted for a moment the veil concealing that enchanted world of which she was ever dreaming, and in which she firmly believed—a world where bright fancies had leave to grow into brighter realities; a world where contradiction was unknown, where hope was never deferred, where trust was never betrayed, and where was never heard Pamela's doleful dirge, declaring that "beauty is a fading flower," and that "all flesh is grass."

Bewildered by a rush of incomprehensible emotions, she was incapable of distinguishing between the fresh and the withered roses, and she gathered indiscriminately all that came to her hand, nor dreamed of the mortification she was preparing for herself against that hour when she should have to sit down soberly to count over her store. How should she divine, half-giddy as she was with the glimpse of that enchanted world, upon the threshold of which she seemed to stand, that she saw only a beautiful vision of impossibilities conjured up by her own idle fancy? The uncompromising Pamela would have told her so without mitigation or remorse; but would she have believed Pamela? Joanna's sensitive, imaginative nature shrank appalled from that grim and bald and naked thing Miss Basil revered as truth.

A well-known voice, softened somewhat by distance, but shrill and penetrating still, broke the spell of silence that had fallen upon the dreaming pair.

"Jo-an-na!" Miss Basil called, or rather wailed, and Joanna started guiltily.

"Ah, me!" she exclaimed, not in fear, but in contrition, while she struggled to extricate herself from what young Hendall, with an execrable attempt at a pun that was unintelligible to his auditor, termed the *Briars*; "how I have wasted the morning!"

"Never mind," said Arthur: "I suppose it is only that horrid Pamela; you need not heed."

"But I must! I must!" cried Joanna. "These old roses should have been in the house long ago. Oh, dear! To think that I should have wasted time so! Go away!" she exclaimed, with sudden irritation. "You only *impede* me. I am not—concerned for my dress; let it tear!" In spite of her annoyance, Joanna must still be select in speech.

Arthur, smiling at her ambitious language, desisted from his efforts to aid her; and she, having extricated herself at the expense of her dress, ran down the walk, fleet and graceful as a fawn, and dropping roses at every step.

Young Hendall stood and watched her out of sight, smiling at the pleasing picture she made. Young and handsome, he was apt to flatter himself that he could be irresistible when he chose to be so; but, to do him justice, no thought of conquest entered his head now; and he would have resented in-

dignantly the imputation of trifling with the little Joanna. In his opinion, there was no more possibility of his trifling with her than of her trifling with him. She was only a clever little thing, in whose company he could pass away the time, without incurring the suspicion of serious intentions.

Miss Basil was in the large store-room, as Joanna knew, packing the baskets of vegetables, eggs, butter, and so forth, to send into the town for sale; for this indefatigable woman gave personal attention to every department of the management of Basilwood with which she could have any thing to do. Mrs. Basil, though she chose to ignore the fact that her orchards and gardens furnished supplies to the people of Middleborough, put no restraint upon these financial expedients; for the little sums that Miss Basil's energy and industry accumulated were not to be despised; but, had she issued her decree against sending vegetables to market, Miss Basil could not have looked more morose and woe-begone. Joanna, peering in at the open window, saw that her countenance boded no good, and hesitated to speak.

There was, however, no need to speak, for Miss Basil, as if with an intuitive perception of her presence, looked up and said, "O child!" conveying both in voice and eyes a volume of reproach that immediately put the little Joanna on the defensive.

"What, 'Mela?" said she, depositing the basket on the window-ledge, and assuming a most innocent air, though her conscience reproached her keenly; for Joanna was well aware that she had been idle, and that idleness in Miss Basil's estimation was a sin, but she had no suspicion of the real cause of Miss Basil's displeasure.

"Come in, child, I must speak to you," said Miss Basil, in a milder tone. She was almost disarmed by Joanna's innocent air. "You stay too much in the garden; you'll be getting in Mr. Hendall's way, and that is not becoming."

"I get in Mr. Hendall's way!" exclaimed Joanna, as she entered the open door, thrusting her hands into her apron-packets with a comically belligerent air. "Oh, indeed, Pamela"—shrugging her shoulders, arching her eyebrows, and flourishing her hands with that exuberance of gesture inherent in her French blood—"that you know is simply impossible. I am sure I don't get in his way.

Can I help it if he meets me? I ought not to be rude, you know, if he speaks."

"Things are ve-ry different, now that he is here," said Miss Basil, taking refuge in the hope of fostering a wholesome antagonism between the scion of the old house and the new master of Basilwood. "It is *his* garden, you must remember."

"I don't see that things are different at all," said Joanna, "else why do you go on with the vegetables and things? Indeed, 'Mela, things are not different at all, and never will be. We shall go on just the same as ever."

"Don't talk nonsense, Joanna," said Miss Basil, sharply. "Basilwood belongs to Mrs. Basil, and will belong to Mr. Hendall; of course, that gives him a better right to walk in the garden than you have; you are but an intruder."

"And just for that," said Joanna, plaintively, "must I stay shut up in the house? Oh, very well, 'Mela; but you know that would be the death of me; and the garden is a roomy place, too."

Now, what could Miss Basil say to this? She only asked for the roses.

"Oh, here they are," said Joanna, cheerfully, turning to the window where she had deposited her basket; "any quantity, you see?" She felt that 'Mela could not justly accuse her of idleness when she saw how many had been gathered.

But Miss Basil did not even look at the heaped-up basket Joanna presented. Her eyes had caught a glimpse of an evidence of recklessness that she with her thrifty habits could not disregard.

"Joanna, child," cried she, sharply, leaning over the side of her chair, and catching Joanna's skirt in her thin hands, "how *did* you contrive to tear your dress so?"

"Oh, now, 'Mela, am I to blame because roses have thorns?" said Joanna, looking behind at her dress, a movement that caused her to tilt the contents of her basket upon the floor.

"It is very evident to me, Joanna," said Miss Basil, fretfully, "that you must have been extremely careless to tear your dress so outrageously."

"I was busy gathering the roses," said Joanna, petulantly, "as you may see by the quantity I've brought."

Miss Basil turned her eyes upon the

ous heap at her feet, examined it with sharp scrutiny, stooped and stirred it with her hand; then raised herself suddenly, and ejaculated, with a vehemence that made Joanna start:

"Mercy guide us, Joanna! who helped you gather these?"

"Nobody," said Joanna, with a steady look, straight into Miss Basil's eyes.

Had Miss Basil expressed, by word or glance, the slightest doubt of Joanna's truth, she must have forfeited the proud-spirited young girl's trust forever; but happily Miss Basil quailed before Joanna's steadfast eyes, and she only said:

"More than half these things are dead and useless trash!"

Joanna dropped upon the floor, blushing crimson, and began nervously to stir the roses with her hands.

"Pamela," she said, deprecatingly, "indeed I gathered them every one myself. I thought them all fresh; but—Mr. Hendall—stood talking with me."

"What did he say to you, you silly child?" asked Miss Basil, laying no very gentle hand upon Joanna's shoulder, and shaking her more roughly than she knew. "You needn't believe in a young man's nonsense."

Joanna turned pale with indignation.

"Mr. Hendall does not talk nonsense, 'Mela; at least—" And there she stopped, in confusion.

"O Joanna, Joanna!" sighed poor Miss Basil, at her wits' end to know how to deliver a judicious and discreet warning to her inexperienced young charge. According to her peculiar views, the remotest allusion to the subject of love was not to be ventured upon in the presence of a young girl without grave impropriety; how, then, was she to warn Joanna not to set her young affections upon Arthur Hendall, how fair soever he might speak, seeing that Joanna ought not to know what that meant? And, in fear of putting the foolish thought into the child's innocent heart, Miss Basil only sighed dolefully, "O Joanna, Joanna!"

"I am the despair of your life, 'Mela," said Joanna, echoing the sigh. "But I am very—penitent; I will not be idle any more, nor careless—if I can help it. I will mend my dress right away."

"Yes," answered Miss Basil, rising promptly, "as you may suppose, to strike while



the iron was hot, according to the words of the proverb, "and I will find you Hannah More's discourse 'On Time considered as a Talent,' which you can read and meditate upon afterward; it will fortify your resolution."

"Oh, no! Oh, don't, Pamela!" cried Joanna, shrinking. "I'll mend my dress with—the utmost neatness and—dispatch, and be ready for any thing else; but I cannot read that stuff!"

"'Stuff,' child?" said Miss Basil, with calm superiority. "It is food for the mind."

"Pamela, it is as dry as last year's stubble. I could not read it and survive."

Miss Basil's judgment was excellent in all that appertained to practical affairs, but she had no insight whatever into character. "Joanna," she reasoned, "is still the same unregenerate Joanna, and wise in her own conceits. Her good resolutions, being but blind impulses, will come to naught, unless nourished by judicious counsels."—"I will read it to you, my child," said she, inexorably, and thinking that perhaps that were the better plan. If she was debarred from singing edifying hymns to this giddy little thing, should she therefore despair of instructing her through the medium of good books?

Miss Basil read but few books, but she believed in those few like medicine, which, according to her theory, could never fail to be beneficial, whether swallowed willingly or unwillingly. She was not so weak as to heed Joanna's objections; she had administered with unshrinking firmness many a distasteful dose for the benefit of the child's bodily health; she could certainly do as much for her moral welfare. And if, during the reading, Joanna wiped away a tear or two to the memory of her brief glimpse of the enchanted land, Miss Basil mistook them for tears of repentance, and was mightily encouraged to proceed; all the while enforcing what she read by a running fire of hortatory remarks, as: "Observe, now, the wisdom of this—" "Mark, now, what follows—" "Attend, now, particularly, child—" "Store this up in your mind, Joanna—" just as she was wont, good, zealous creature, with foot-baths and mustard-plasters, to assist the medicines she administered.

O Duty! what mistakes are committed in thy name! The little Joanna, setting ill-conditioned stitches through her tears, resolved

in her desperate heart that neither age nor rheumatism should ever persuade her to take pleasure in the respectable Hannah More.

CHAPTER X.

WORDS OF CAUTION THROWN AWAY.

MISS BASIL, reflecting in solitude upon the revelations the little Joanna had made, decided that if a fitting opportunity should offer, she would speak a word in season to young Hendall himself. She had never met him face to face; she could not tell what manner of man he might be, nor what argument would be most likely to prevail with him; therefore she took no thought what she should say to him, but, trusting that the right words would be put into her mouth when the time should come, she contented herself with watching for the occasion—as to going boldly forward and forcing an occasion, that was quite beyond her powers.

However, the opportunity arose at last, in the most natural way possible, when she was not looking for it; and perhaps that was why poor Miss Basil failed to express her mind exactly as she had desired to express it.

Arthur Hendall, with nothing to do, liked to loiter about the garden; the tertian agreed that Mrs. Basil still harped upon had yielded to Dr. Garnet's treatment, and he was not to be kept in-doors by any old-womanish fears of a return of the chills. Strolling about, one morning, in search of Joanna and amusement, he bent his steps toward her favorite haunt, the little alcove, where the oleander-bushes grew; and there, leaning against the mimosa-tree, absorbed in a letter she was reading, stood—not Joanna, but Miss Basil. He did not discover his mistake until it was too late to retreat.

Aleck Griswold, as it happened, had been very late with the mail that morning, old Thurston was busy about some errand for Mrs. Basil, and so Miss Basil herself had waited at the gate, to the detriment of her affairs, for the eagerly-expected letter; and she had stolen to this retreat to read it. What she read therein seemed to work a wondrous change in her; she was no longer the every-day Miss Basil; she had fallen into a dream, and Joanna should have been by to

see the mild, benignant face that beamed upon Arthur Hendall from under the big sun-bonnet.

Young Hendall guessed instantly who she was, though she had none of the forbidding appearance he had permitted himself to associate with poor little Joanna's task-mistress. He was relieved to find that there was nothing dragonish about her, and he offered his hand at once, saying :

"You must be Miss Basil, I am sure; and I am very happy to meet you."

She started. Something in his voice, something in his smile, carried her back to a time long past, and disarmed her. She gave him her hand, but turned her face away.

"I trust you are better of your chills, Mr. Hendall?" she said, as she put her spectacles into their case.

"Have I had chills?" said Arthur, as if he doubted the fact. "I am—astonishingly well, thank you."

Miss Basil looked at him gravely. "I hope you never come out before breakfast," said she; "it is very imprudent." Miss Basil would have given her bitterest enemy the benefit of sound views on the subject of hygiene.

"Oh, there is no danger," said Arthur. "I find that my breakfast is generally ready for me, before I am ready for it. And a tempting meal it is, Miss Basil, for which I know my thanks are due to yourself."

But Miss Basil was proof against flattery, and she received this compliment coldly.

"I like to walk about in this old garden," continued Arthur, as if he would fain be on sociable terms with Joanna's discreet guardian. "It is just the soil for—for—"

"For meditation," he was going to say, if any thing; but Miss Basil had fixed a mildly-inquiring glance upon him that completely disconcerted his thoughts.

"It is a very good soil, especially for potatoes and cabbages," said the practical Miss Basil, who knew a great deal more about gardening than about managing a young man; nevertheless, she was casting about in her mind for the word in season.

"And roses?" suggested Arthur.

Miss Basil instantly seized her cue.

"I hope, Mr. Hendall," said she, abruptly, "that my little Joanna is not in your way here?"

"Certainly not," Arthur answered, color-

ing. He thought Miss Basil alluded to Joanna's presence at Basilwood. "I am sure she is not in my way; I hope you will give me credit for—for some generosity, and good feeling, you know, and all that. Oh, no; don't let such a thought trouble you; she is no more in my way than you are."

It was not a flattering way of putting the case, and Miss Basil, hardly knowing whether she felt relieved or indignant, remained silent.

"How beautifully every thing flourishes here!" continued Arthur, in haste to change the subject. "I suppose you understand all about gardening, Miss Basil? What is this green thing growing here on the border?"

"That is lucern," Miss Basil made answer, with a sigh. She felt, helplessly, that the subject on which she most wished to talk was drifting away from her; but, knowing that there was work waiting for her in the house, she turned away.

"It is a fine thing for bordering," said he, approvingly, as he walked by Miss Basil's side.

"It is a much finer thing for the cows," said Miss Basil, with a feeling, half pity, half contempt, for his ignorance. "I advise you, Mr. Hendall, if ever you plant, not to make the common mistake of thinking that this soil can grow nothing but cotton."

Miss Basil had mounted her hobby now, and, finding an attentive listener, she forgot Joanna in her desire to prove the folly of not raising enough to eat, and the wisdom of cultivating cotton merely as a surplus crop.

But Joanna herself came to interrupt Miss Basil's disquisition.

"Mr. Hendall," she said, "the grand-mamma wishes to speak to you—im—mediately."

With a big sun-bonnet on her head, and a pair of gauntlets on her hands, she looked like a second edition of Miss Basil. Evidently she was bent upon some important expedition.

"What are you going to do?" asked Arthur, with a lively interest; and Miss Basil awoke with a pang to the perception that she had neglected her opportunity, and she sighed.

"I am going to plant the balsam-vines around the old stump in the corner next the

ravine, 'Mela; you told me I might,' Joanna said, looking at Miss Basil, and not at Arthur Hendall.

"Be sure you are not longer than fifteen minutes about it, Joanna," said Miss Basil, so peremptorily that Arthur, who, in spite of his aunt's message, would gladly have turned back with her, felt himself forbidden.

Mrs. Basil was not alone. A gentleman, neither young nor old, rather stout, and partially bald, sat, or rather lounged, on the sofa, and hardly seemed willing to rise when Arthur entered.

"Oh, how do you do, Sam? Glad to see you. When did you come?" said Arthur, shaking hands.

"Arrived yesterday morning," said Mr. Sam Ruffner. "Dreadfully knocked up, all of us; but thought I'd come round and report, and see how you all are. How is that scratch of yours? You don't wear a sling, I see?"

"Pooh, pooh!" said Arthur. "It is forgotten, long ago."

"He *won't* wear a sling," said Mrs. Basil, plaintively. "But that 'scratch' isn't such a trifle as he pretends, Sam, I assure you; and it might have been a very serious affair, you know."

"Yes, yes—I dare say," said Mr. Sam, easily. "Tremendous distance from our place here," he continued, turning up his coat-sleeves, and settling his collar. "Must get a horse if I come often."

"Yes, I know; the Harrington place, you have. It is remote," said Mrs. Basil. "Do you make any stay—I mean you yourself?"

"Well," Mr. Sam answered, with a yawn, "I shall make myself handy about the house for the summer."

And then he laughed; but nobody ever did know why Mr. Sam laughed at his own jokes, unless it was to show his handsome teeth.

"I hope your planting interest won't suffer," Mrs. Basil remarked.

Mr. Sam whistled a few notes softly, by way of reply, and then asked, abruptly:

"How do you like Middleborough, Arthur?"

"I haven't seen Middleborough, except as I passed through," Arthur answered. "I was sick when I came, and then we've had wet weather. I haven't thought about the town."

"Haven't found out the pretty girls yet?" Mr. Sam asked, slyly.

"No," said Arthur; "I leave that for you to do."

"There's no Miss Basil, is there, for you to fall in love with, eh? Such a susceptible fellow!" And Mr. Sam laughed.

"No," interrupted Mrs. Basil, quickly; "no indeed. Miss Basil is old enough to be Arthur's mother."

Arthur wondered if his aunt had forgotten the little Joanna; but Mrs. Basil had not forgotten her at all. While she sat smiling and smiling at Mr. Sam Ruffner's rattling talk, she was thinking over what she should say to Arthur about seeking the little Joanna's acquaintance; for, between Miss Basil and Mr. Sam, Mrs. Basil began to feel some uneasiness. She had looked out of the window and seen Miss Basil walking in the garden with Arthur, and she had jumped to the unwelcome conclusion that the managing woman was beginning already to plan a match for Joanna. She had but little fear, indeed, that Miss Basil could succeed; but Mr. Sam's careless words seemed to warn her that Arthur's susceptible disposition might expose him to some embarrassment from Miss Basil's machinations if he were not properly warned of his danger; and that warning she was determined to give. She did not urge Mr. Sam to remain when he showed a disposition to depart.

"My love to them all, Sam; your mother, and Jane, and dear Cousin Elizabeth. I sent only this morning to inquire about all of you, and I shall lose no time in going to see for myself."

"Do," said Sam; "delighted to see you, all of us."

"*All of us!*" How Mrs. Basil hated that cool way he had of seeming to appropriate Mrs. Stargold solely to the Ruffners! But she grew more and more gracious as Sam drew nearer and nearer the front-door. "Do come often," she said. "I shall expect you, one and all, to dine with me very soon; and I'll take care to have a pretty girl to meet you, Sam."

"Thank you, thank you! That's my favorite dessert, you know," said Sam, and ex- it, laughing.

"Hold on, Sam!" cried Arthur. "If you are going toward town I'll walk with you. You've put me in the notion of seeing the place."

"Arthur, my dear," said his aunt, "the walk is long, and you are not well, remember."

But remonstrance was useless, and she was compelled to delay her admonitions for that morning. However, when she had leisure to think about it, she saw that, if she wished her counsels to prevail, she must choose her time wisely and deliberately. Accordingly, she waited until that propitious moment when she and her nephew were comfortably sipping their coffee together after dinner. Then she asked, with well-assumed carelessness:

"Do tell me, Arthur, what you and Miss Basil were discussing so earnestly this morning?"

"Planting," said Arthur, promptly. "I wonder you don't take her advice in some things rather than old Griswold's. I don't know any thing about the business myself," he added apologetically, seeing his aunt begin to frown; "but she seems to have what I should call progressive ideas."

"She has *hobbies*," said Mrs. Basil, slightly. "I never listen to her." If Pamela had been giving her views about farming, she wasn't likely to have said much about the little Joanna; but that was no reason why she should not utter her warning. "A most worthy woman is Pamela, but so full of theories—"

"I beg your pardon," said Arthur, "but I thought you once told me that she is eminently practical?"

"Oh, yes, in certain things; but look, for instance, how she has trained up that little Joanna. However, I don't suppose you have any opportunity to remark that?"

Arthur was silent; but Mrs. Basil was not thus to be rebuffed.

"I trust the child never intrudes upon you?" she asked, rather abruptly.

"By no means," replied Arthur, lazily stirring his coffee. "She is rather disposed to avoid me."

"I am not responsible for her training," continued Mrs. Basil, "as I believe I have explained before; but I can never forget that she is the judge's granddaughter, and of course I feel a certain interest in her. I should be very, very sorry if her ignorance of the usages of the polite world should betray the poor child into unladylike forwardness. Miss Basil does not think of these things, and I must."

"She seems a nice little thing, so far as I can see," said Arthur. "But, I say, aunt, why should this Miss Basil and the little Joanna, as you call her, live so aloof from us; why don't they take their meals with us, for example?"

"Arthur," said his aunt, reproachfully, "as if that were my fault. Do you know at what time Miss Basil breakfasts? Somewhere between five and six. Now, do you think I could find an appetite at that unearthly hour?"

"No; nor I," said Arthur, laughing.

"It is Miss Basil's own fault that she does not breakfast and dine with me," Mrs. Basil continued. "But I suppose she finds habit as strong with her as it is with me, and I let her have her own way. I'm sure it's a kindness, if you will look at it in the right light. As to the little Joanna, I have nothing to do with her; and Miss Basil is bringing her up in her own image—*her own image*; and you see what *she* is."

Arthur laughed; he was thinking how piquant Joanna looked in that big sun-bonnet going to plant the balsam-vines around the old stump, and he wondered if there were not more balsam-vines yet to be planted.

His aunt sighed.

"I am sorry for the child," she said; "her lot would have been very different, no doubt, had her grandfather's life been spared; but what can I do? Well, this much at least I can do," she said, with a slight laugh, and laying her hand on Arthur's arm—"I can warn you not to give her any opportunity to indulge any sentimental fancy for yourself."

Arthur, toying with his spoon, disguised a frown by a yawn. His aunt's suggestions of prudence, though he did think them unnecessary, made him uncomfortable.

"It is no compliment to you, my dear, I am well aware," continued his aunt, soothingly, "to say that you are vastly this poor child's superior; and of course you can't feel as I do about Judge Basil's granddaughter; but I hope my feelings on the subject will excuse my suggesting a proper degree of dignity and reserve on your part?"

"My dear aunt," said Arthur, with admirable indifference, "what is the use of all this about a *child*?"

"So she is a child," said Mrs. Basil, forcing a laugh; "and I shouldn't expect you to feel any particular interest in the judge's

granddaughter, should I?—I have ordered the carriage for a drive, will you go with me?"

But Arthur, divining that she was going to pay her respects to Mrs. Stargold, excused himself; and his aunt, thinking, probably, that in a first interview she could reconnoitre the situation better without him, did not press him.

Notwithstanding all his aunt's unmistakable hints and cautions, young Hendall, the moment he had attended her to her carriage, went into the garden with the distinct hope of meeting the little Joanna. He had brought her some flower-seeds from the town, and, if she could not plant balsam-vines for his pleasure, she could plant something else.

This is invariably the way in which our young heroes reward our cares. They receive our monitions with a flattering silence that seems to give consent to all we ask, but the moment our backs are turned they rejoice greatly in their strength, and go forth to court the very danger against which we have vainly warned them! It was not Arthur's fault that he did not find the little Joanna, for she was not in the garden. She had gone "across the bridge," as they say in Upper Middleborough when one goes shopping. Her errand was to replenish the spice-box; for Mrs. Basil had given Miss Basil warning that a dinner-party was inevitable, and that provident house-keeper, wishing to begin her preparations in good season, had dispatched Joanna forthwith in quest of cinnamon and nutmegs and other good things that she knew would be needed.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. BASIL RECONNOITRES.

MRS. BASIL in her shabby little carriage, drawn by one shabby horse in shabby harness, and driven by old Thurston in a shabby suit, went on her way funereally. When one compared this sorry turnout with the goodly equipage in which this lady used to raise the dust of Middleborough before the war, one could understand why her heart was set on Mrs. Stargold's money. But the dogs barked after her just the same as in days gone by, and in the course of time she arrived at the house Mrs. Stargold had rented.

Before she could touch the bell, the door was opened by Miss Ruffner in person, a tall, thin, dressy woman of no particular age. She greeted Mrs. Basil in a studied whisper.

"Very glad to see you, cousin. You will excuse my officiousness in assuming the servant's place; but I feared the bell might disturb Cousin Elizabeth, who is trying to sleep. Walk in, please," she added, throwing open the parlor-door with an air of proprietorship most exasperating to Mrs. Basil.

But Mrs. Basil was not to be overawed by Jane Ruffner. She took in the room with all its appointments at a single glance, and would not appear impressed by any thing she saw.

"We have a fine situation here," said Miss Ruffner, opening a window.

"I am glad that you are pleased," said Mrs. Basil, with chilling indifference. "It is not so high, however, as Basilwood, and it is rather remote."

"Remote from Basilwood, yes," Miss Ruffner assented, with a peculiar smile Mrs. Basil did not like; "but, in the present state of Cousin Elizabeth's health, seclusion is desirable."

Mrs. Basil drew herself up stiffly. Had not Arthur and herself quite as distinct claims upon Mrs. Stargold as these Ruffners? "The distance is not worth considering when one rides," said she, as grandly as though her poor little old carriage were the best in the land; "and Arthur will ride over in a day or two to call. I had hoped to see Cousin Elizabeth this afternoon, and am sorry to be denied." She did not believe now that Mrs. Stargold was trying to sleep.

Miss Ruffner coughed, by which she seemed to express that it was to be expected that Mrs. Basil would selfishly annoy poor Cousin Elizabeth with her attentions.

"Do the physicians consider her case particularly serious?" Mrs. Basil asked.

"Doctors are not infallible, you know," replied Miss Ruffner, evasively. "She suffers extremely from nervous prostration, and it is not thought advisable that she should see company. I seldom see her myself, except when she wishes me to read to her. Mother seems to be indispensable to her comfort; and Sam relieves her of all care about business."

"I should think that Sam must find it rather inconvenient neglecting his planting

interests," remarked Mrs. Basil, dryly. "Cotton is not so easily made, nowadays."

"No, indeed," Miss Ruffner assented; "but Sam is not selfish; he can give up his interests for Cousin Elizabeth's."

"Oh, I dare say he can afford to do so," said Mrs. Basil, with libelous emphasis. "Such disinterestedness should meet its reward."

"Sam looks for no reward but the approval of his own conscience," said Miss Ruffner, with virtuous calm. "The presence of a gentleman on the place is indispensable to Cousin Elizabeth's comfort. Oh, by-the-way, how is Arthur, after that little farce of his with the burglars?"

"It might have been a tragedy," said Mrs. Basil, coldly.

"So it might. And indeed there is no telling yet what may come of it. You know, I suppose Arthur has told you, about the bursting of that panel in an old escritoire? Well, it seems that escritoire once belonged to Francis Hendall, and, on that account, Cousin Elizabeth set great store by it. If all her silver had been stolen, I don't think she could have taken it so to heart. I believe she looks upon the accident as an omen, a warning, a summons. She has been busy with papers and lawyers ever since."

"I don't believe it will result seriously," said Mrs. Basil, with evident displeasure. "She hasn't yet had time to recover from the shock; but Cousin Elizabeth is too sensible a woman to fall a victim to superstition."

"Oh, we hope for the best," said Miss Ruffner, resignedly. "But then, you know, we must humor her a little. It really is a sort of amusement to her, I suppose, to arrange her papers and all that; and then she is naturally jealous of any appearance of interference. Oh, now that I think of it, you remember Basil Redmond, do you not?"

Mrs. Basil heard the name with an involuntary start. She had thought Basil Redmond dead, or forever passed out of her world. What had he to do with what they were talking of, she wondered. But, recovering herself, she answered, calmly:

"Certainly, I remember him."

Miss Ruffner smiled; she knew that Mrs. Basil had never been fond of the judge's ward.

"Perhaps," said she, with furtive irony,

"you may be pleased to know that you will have an opportunity to renew acquaintance with him. A particular friend of Mrs. Star-gold's has written her to announce his coming at an early day. You know he is now a promising young lawyer somewhere in California; I forget the name of the place."

No, Mrs. Basil did not know it; but she saw no necessity to confess her ignorance.

"I shall be happy to meet him again," she said. It would be very like meeting the ghost of the past; and yet, twelve years absence must, of course, have obliterated the old antagonism with which the unruly boy had regarded her; and as for herself, she scorned to bear malice.

"I thought you could not have forgotten him," Miss Ruffner remarked, blandly. "As a youth I know he was no favorite of yours; and we more easily forget those we like than those we dislike."

This Rochefoucauld-like sentiment Mrs. Basil thought proper to ignore. "I am rejoiced to hear a good report of him; of course I naturally feel an interest in his success as a relative of my husband's. May I ask what brings him to Middleborough?"

"Indeed," said Miss Ruffner, "I don't know; I only know that he brings letters of introduction from Cousin Elizabeth's friend."

"I had lost sight of him," said Mrs. Basil; "through his own fault entirely. But I shall welcome him back with pleasure, and Miss Basil, I'm sure, will welcome him as gladly as I."

"His aunt, isn't she? What a treasure you have in her!"

"No; she is not his aunt. Mrs. Redmond, I believe, was a Basil, and a cousin, once or twice removed. Yes, Pamela is a treasure in her way, certainly; but I attribute all Basil Redmond's boyish delinquencies to her injudicious indulgence. However, I would not be hard upon her. No doubt she has repented of that weakness, for she was very ill after he left, and cost me, I remember, a world of trouble." And Mrs. Basil reflected with pride that she had administered medicine to her sick house-keeper with her own hands. Then she rose to take leave, Miss Ruffner protesting that it was "early yet."

"No," said Mrs. Basil, "it is late. I am sorry not to have seen Cousin Elizabeth or your mother." (Mrs. Basil never called Mrs. Ruffner "cousin" if she could avoid it.) "I

shall hope to have you at Basilwood soon ; some day next week, say ? ”

Miss Ruffner could not promise ; every thing depended upon dear Cousin Elizabeth's health ; and then the two kissed each other, and Mrs. Basil drove away, her thoughts busy with Basil Redmond. That he, of all people in the world, should come with letters of recommendation to Mrs. Stargold ! It was enough to make her rail against Fate.

But she did not rail against Fate ; on the whole, she was rather disposed to regard Basil Redmond's return as a piece of good fortune. It might be possible through him to counteract the influence of the Ruffners upon her wealthy cousin. She was conscious, indeed, that she had been guilty of more than coldness toward him when he was a lad at Basilwood, but she meant, now, that he should forget the past. Pamela, usually so inhospitable, would aid her to welcome him, and he might be made to relieve her mind of those misgivings as to Miss Basil's designs upon Arthur, misgivings that would, now and again, return.

This thought, surely, was an inspiration ! Mrs. Basil remembered that young Redmond had been fond of Baby Joanna when he was a school-boy at Basilwood, and, thought she, if Joanna's rustic appearance were a little improved, what might not be hoped for ? Surely, now that he had proved himself worthy of being recommended to Mrs. Stargold's notice, a marriage between Basil Redmond, the judge's former ward, and the little Joanna, the judge's orphan granddaughter, would be highly satisfactory to all parties, and very creditable to herself, if she could bring it to pass. With little or no belief in love, Mrs. Basil had a strong feminine faith in a judicious marriage as the very best thing for young people ; and what, she thought, could better insure a judicious marriage than an experienced head to plan it ? In this, as in every thing else, young people ought to consider their duty to their elders, as it was manifestly impossible that their elders would have any object in view but the good of the inexperienced young people.

Mrs. Basil had never felt better pleased with herself than when this matrimonial scheme entered her head. She was ready at the moment to act upon it ; and, just as the carriage was about to turn the corner of the avenue that led to Basilwood, she ordered

old Thurston across the bridge, spanning the narrow but dangerous stream separating Upper Middleborough from the lower town where the shops are situated.

“ Drive to Lebrun's, on Broad Street,” she said, to old Thurston's inexpressible amazement, Mrs. Basil so seldom went into the lower town ; and at that hour, when already lamps were beginning to be lighted, it was impossible to guess what she could want at Lebrun's, the fashionable milliner of Middleborough.

The carriage stopped in front of the large, conspicuous window, tricked out with all a *modiste's* cunning, and Mrs. Basil, leaning on her ivory-headed staff, entered the wide door.

She had not been within that sanctuary of dress and fashion for years, as she ordered her few hats and dresses from Westport ; and yellow little Miss Lydia Crane, the head clerk, who spent her days fitting hats, matching ribbons, and lavishing compliments, and her nights in dreaming of lucky numbers in the lottery, quite lost her presence of mind.

When Mrs. Basil, leaning on her handsome staff, asked to look at white organdie polonaises, “ something very chaste and simple, for a young person,” the habitual flatterer, with her hand vacillating between two large, green paper-boxes, faltered forth :

“ Is it for yourself, madam ? ” She had paid so many compliments in defiance of the truth that she was unconscious of the satire of her words, until Mrs. Basil replied, with strong dignity—

“ For a very young person,” I said.

Miss Crane apologized awkwardly, and pulled down one of the boxes with trembling hands. Mrs. Basil was now neither a woman of fashion nor a woman of means, everybody in Middleborough knew that ; but she was still a person of some distinction, and her visits were an honor to boast of, all the greater honor because they were so rare ; wherefore Miss Crane was more than usually anxious to be agreeable. The polonaises were exhibited, a great variety, and their merits descanted upon with that pliant eloquence which is everywhere the distinctive trait of a milliner's head-clerk.

Mrs. Basil, startled equally by the excessive trimming and the extravagant price of these airy habiliments, selected the plainest and least expensive, which was immediately

pronounced by Miss Crane to be the most "researchy" of the assortment.

At Mrs. Basil's request, she obligingly proceeded to fold the purchase carefully in a box, endeavoring, meanwhile, to elicit some information in regard to Mrs. Stargold, whose advent had created an excitement among the gossips.

"Very low, I regret to hear she is, ma'am, your relative, Mrs. Stargold. A large fortune and a large connection."

Mrs. Basil was deaf and dumb; but Miss Crane was not to be repressed in the pursuit of knowledge. She purposely lingered over the package as she tied it, that she might gain time to ask:

"Is it true, then, ma'am, that her days are numbered?"

"Every one's days are numbered," answered Mrs. Basil, coldly.

"Very true," Miss Crane assented, obligingly. "'We all do fade as a leaf,' and 'death is the end of life.' Did I show you those fuschias? Not that you would wear the like, being out of colors; but as a work of art they'll bear *examination*."

Mrs. Basil quietly took out her purse and handed the garrulous little woman a bill.

"I do not wish to see the fuschias," she said.

"Sarah!" shrieked Miss Crane, pushing the bill along the counter to a pale, round-shouldered girl of fifteen, "change, quick, for Mrs. Basil. Seven twenty-five."

"Speaking of the number seven," she continued, with an air of mystery, turning again to Mrs. Basil, "I must tell you of a curious vision I had" (Miss Crane's dreams were all visions) "the very night your wealthy relative arrived. I shouldn't speak of it, but it strikes me it *does* concern you. In a vision of the night, Mrs. Stargold cried to me, in a loud voice, 'Fifty-six is the lucky number.' Oddly enough, too, fifty-six dollars and fifty-six cents was the amount of various bills I had been making out before I got me to bed, but that has nothing to do with it. The point is, ma'am, your coming into our rooms" (Madame Lebrun could not endure to have the word *shop* applied to her establishment) "the first time you've honored us these many years.—Yes, Sarah" (this with a nod to the round-shouldered girl who brought the change), "all right."

"It is late," said Mrs. Basil, with dignity,

perceiving that Miss Crane was in no haste to make over the change.

"Sarah, lights, *lights*!" said Miss Crane, sharply. "Pardon the oversight, ma'am; it is late. But, as I was a-saying, any reflective mind must see that where there's eight letters to spell *Stargold*, and seven to spell *Hendall*, the natural result, by multiplication, is *fifty-six*."

"I think I must be going," said Mrs. Basil, haughtily; "if you will be kind enough to give me the change." There was a time when she would have walked out of the shop and left the two dollars and seventy-five cents due her for change; but Mrs. Basil couldn't throw away that sum on her dignity now.

"Oh, excuse me!" said Miss Crane, beginning immediately to count out the change; then, surrendering it with a profusion of thanks, she continued, volubly, while Mrs. Basil, with her accustomed deliberation, was disposing of her purse:

"I do hear, most strange of all, that Mr. Basil Redmond may be expected here any day."

Mrs. Basil looked up, involuntarily, with a keen glance, but quickly looked down again.

"I have my information from Rebecca that used to belong to Mrs. Paul Caruthers. Rebecca is engaged to cook for Mrs. Stargold, and she observes a good deal," said Miss Crane, eagerly. "Shall I show you some sashes? Polonaises are generally considered incomplete without a sash."

"No," replied Mrs. Basil; she had heard enough. "Good-evening."

"Good-evening," said Miss Crane, with unction.—"Sarah, here! This box, I say, to Mrs. Basil's carriage, quick.—Always so happy to serve you, ma'am."

"Home, Thurston!" said Mrs. Basil, in a voice more than usually authoritative. It was intolerable to see her own sordid speculations reflected by this odious little gossip. Yet, as she leaned back in her carriage, she remembered to have heard that Miss Crane had once dreamed of a lucky number in some lottery, and had very nearly gone mad because the person to whom she revealed it purchased the ticket, and drew the prize. When she remembered this, Mrs. Basil caught herself spelling the names *Stargold* and *Hendall* on her fingers; but finding, by the same test, that the name of Ruffner also was com-

posed of seven letters, she blushed with contempt at her own fatuity, and at once dismissed the superstition, as she would have dismissed any other impertinent intruder.

When she arrived at Basilwood, she sent the green box immediately to her room, whither she followed without delay, and, dismissing the prying Myra, she fastened her door, and proceeded to ransack her wardrobe with some impatience.

"A sash," she mused. "Here is my handsome Roman sash, that has not seen the light for years. But my day is over; I shall never want such finery again. Joanna is young; let her take it, and the fan and handkerchief along with it."

Mrs. Basil sighed as she took out a stiff, gorgeous sash, and, with it, a lace handkerchief and an ivory fan, both of them "*tout jaunis de la renfermée*," to use George Sand's expressive but untranslatable phrase. These articles she placed in the box with the polonaise, and locked all quickly out of sight, as if the long-disused finery recalled some painful memories.

CHAPTER XII.

I CARE NOT, FORTUNE, WHAT YOU ME DENY.

THE little Joanna, walking home from the town, had not a penny in her purse, and no expectations from any wealthy relative; yet it is doubtful whether Mrs. Basil, in the days of her riches and her glory, ever was as happy as this careless girl who had just expended her whole fortune—a long-hoarded gold-piece—for a chromo, known in the catalogue as "The Bluebird's Nest."

Many different things had Joanna meant, at various times, to do with that precious five-dollar piece—all manner of purchases had she debated, but she had never dreamed of buying a picture. Had she but left her money at home when she went "across the bridge" on Miss Basil's errand, she might still look forward to a new hat, or some fresh ribbons, or a long-coveted pink lawn that adorned Jones & Atkinson's window; but she would not, in that case, have been the happy possessor of that exquisite treasure which seemed to assemble, in a little square of pasteboard, all the charms of spring. Had she left that money at home— But what girl of seventeen, with five dollars of her

own, likes to go into the streets without her purse?

Not Joanna, assuredly. Although she could think of nothing that she particularly needed to buy at that time, she yet must take her little hoard; for, without it, she would have been a stranger to that comfortable sense of independence which is the natural result of carrying a purse of gold all one's own. Then, too, how easy was self-denial, with the means of gratification at hand! Joanna could pass by the flaunting ribbons in Lebrun's gay windows without a sigh; she could turn away from the pink lawn at Jones & Atkinson's without a pang, knowing that, did she choose, she might have either ribbons or lawn. With her talismanic gold-piece in her pocket, nor lawns, nor ribbons, nor any other finery, had power to tempt her; but, when she came to the deep, wide window of Carter the stationer, she wavered, for here the gold-piece began to change its character; for a talisman it became a snare.

Joanna could at any time pass Lebrun's more easily than Carter's. Had she been wealthy, she would have patronized him liberally; as it was, she never failed, on the few occasions when she went into the town, to pay his window the homage of the eyes; and, having accomplished Miss Basil's errand, she stood now fascinated by the parade of pictures, not knowing which most to admire, until her enraptured gaze fell upon "The Bluebird's Nest," which elicited from her a half-suppressed cry of joyful recognition.

The daylight was fading fast, the picture looked but dim; yet Joanna's quick and sympathetic vision could discern the delicate tints of the mossed apple-bough, in a notch of which the round little nest was so cunningly framed. While she lingered, loath to depart, a clerk came to the window and lighted a jet of gas; when, as if by magic, the mossed apple-bough displayed an exquisite cluster of apple-blossoms. Joanna almost fancied that she could smell them. The glow of rapturous delight that had suffused her face faded slowly, and was succeeded by the pallor of a deep resolve. She had determined to possess that picture. She said to herself: "I have withstood the ribbons; I have denied myself all the frivolities of dress; I do not see why I may not, therefore, have this picture *for the nourishment of my mind*." And she walked resolutely into the store.

A gentleman was standing with his back against the show-case on the opposite side from that where the picture was; but Joanna would hardly have noticed him, had he not stared at her so earnestly that she felt embarrassed, and a little alarmed. He did not cease to scrutinize her even when Mr. Carter brought him a package of paper, with the remark:

"This, sir, is the very best article in the market."

Middleborough people always keep the best of every thing in their line, if one may believe all they say.

The gentleman, appearing to examine the paper, continued to glance furtively, now and again, at Joanna, who, however, had ceased to be conscious of his notice from the moment she held the chromo in her covetous grasp. The price was five dollars—all the money she had in the world. The information startled her; but, on near inspection, the picture proved absolutely irresistible.

"I'll take it," said she, recklessly; and she surrendered her gold-piece without one regret, but not without a certain sense of guilt, that, while it blurred her vision, it rendered her hearing preternaturally acute. Every word that the fat and pompous stationer uttered seemed to strike upon her ears with the sonorousness of a trumpet, and to condemn her purchase as folly.

"You were inquiring about the Basils, sir?" said Mr. Carter, with the loud, aggressive tone of a man ready to proclaim his sentiments to the multitude. "Well, sir, the old judge died, ten years or so ago, not worth a cent; no, sir! *not a cent*, more's the pity! A fine gentleman he was, of the old school—not fit for *these* times. Left a granddaughter, by name Joanna"—how Joanna started!—"and that queer Miss Basil, a distant cousin, as I've heard. The two live with the judge's widow, as grand a lady, sir, as ever stepped, snow-white hair, ivory-headed staff, and all; but no fortune; nothing left but the old Basilwood place, and rickety, sir, rickety that place is, as never you saw!" Here Mr. Carter raised his hands and eyes, and shook his head. His own place was the most complete little gingerbread villa in all the country about Middleborough. "They've none so much money to spend, I fancy," he added, charitably.

"Give me my package, please," said Jo-

anna to the clerk that was waiting upon her. "None so much money to spend," rang in her ears like a reproach. Though she had but spent her own money, she felt like a thief, and she hurried away as if she feared the officers of justice might follow; but what she really feared was Miss Basil's condemnation of her purchase. "No matter," was her philosophical reflection, as she pursued her way home; "whatever I buy, Pamela says it shows a lack of judgment. Nothing would satisfy her taste but over-shoes and flannel petticoats."

The stranger who had not ceased to watch Joanna while she remained in the store, turned abruptly to Mr. Carter, as soon as she was gone, and said:

"I'll take that chromo, 'The Bluebird's Nest.'"

"Why, sir," said the clerk that had waited on Joanna, "it is just this moment sold. It was Judge Basil's granddaughter bought it."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Carter, in unfeigned astonishment. "Why, its price is five dollars, Phillips."

"She paid for it *in gold*, sir," said Phillips. "She was in a great hurry, too."

"Well! that's what I call he-red-itary extravagance," said Mr. Carter, waving his hands, by way of being emphatic. "The old judge, sir, rest his lavish soul, never could resist that class of articles. It's a pity, sir, we had but the one; but if you'll call to-morrow I'll endeavor to recover it for you. Something else would suit her as well."

"No, no, indeed," said the stranger; "let her keep it, by all means. It is of no importance; let it go."

Foolish, foolish, little Joanna! What had she in exchange for her gold-piece but a bit of card-board, with a picture of a bird's-nest, such as one might find, any day, in the orchards?

But one must see through other organs than the eyes of the flesh to comprehend the foolishness of a heart like hers. To the little Joanna this bluebird's nest was something more than an exquisite picture of a familiar object; it was an embodiment of sentiments, distinct, indeed, and full of charm, but indefinable. It was not only that the intoxicating perfume of her favorite apple-blossoms was in that delicately-tinted cluster; it was not only that the voice of the pretty

warbler was in that downy nest; a sentiment of peace and consolation was associated in her mind with a bird's tiny home; an association that had its forgotten origin far back in Joanna's early childhood, at a time when she experienced her first great grief, the scalping of her wax-doll by her sister Anita. A tall, strong youth, Joanna's earliest friend, whom she had long forgotten, took pity on the heart-broken baby, wiped away her tears of impotent rage, and, lifting her in his arms, carried her to the orchard, where, on the bough of an old apple-tree, he showed her just so charming a little nest as the one in the picture, and told her a wonderful story of the mother-bird and the three speckled eggs. It was not that Joanna remembered all this when she determined to possess the picture; the incident had been long forgotten, but the impression remained, and had its influence on her determination.

Her happiness, however, was not a little chilled, after the first ecstatic thrill of possession, by the reflection that she must enjoy the picture alone. She shrank from confessing her purchase to Miss Basil, not so much through dread of her displeasure as through fear of the contempt she would be sure to display for her treasure. "If only Pamela *could* feel about it as I do, I could give it to her with joy," thought Joanna—for she was not selfish—"but, oh, I never could brave her looking sidewise at it, and lamenting my lack of judgment."

Thereupon Joanna resolved to put off the evil day; she would not confess an extravagance she could not regret, but she would try to be very, very good, in order to make amends; and she was so quiet, so gentle, so brisk and industrious the next morning about her various little household duties that Miss Basil began to feel encouraged. The good woman was thoroughly satisfied that Hannah More's sage discourse "On Time considered as a Talent" had produced a radical change for the better in her heedless young cousin's character.

Little did she understand the case. Joanna was yet young enough to forget her sufferings, how poignant soever they might be, and she remembered no more of the wisdom that emanated from Barley Grove than she did of the woful penalty once incurred by helping herself unbidden to raspberry-jam. As soon as her work was over for the morn-

ing, and she could enjoy a moment of leisure with a clear conscience, Joanna was again an idler in the irresistible garden.

Arthur Hendall, sauntering down the walks, saw her sitting in the shadow of the mimosa-tree, where he had encountered Miss Basil, and his curiosity was strongly excited to know what she could be studying so intently; for Joanna was absorbed in the contemplation of her treasure.

"Pray what have you there?" he asked, seating himself beside her on the weather-beaten bench.

She put the picture into his hands at once.

"Look!" she said. "I bought that with all the money I had in the world; and it is well worth it, don't you think so? I understand now the sense of Pamela's saying, 'Work is a blessing,' for work makes money, and money can buy such things as these."

"And you, too, Joanna," said Arthur, "you believe in money, like the rest of your sex?"

"Surely," said Joanna, with childlike simplicity, "it is a good thing to believe in! See what it will buy! Pamela wishes to make me industrious, and last year she offered me a—a *proportion* of the profits on the honey, if I would take care of the bees. Taking care of the bees is easy enough; but I had to keep the accounts, to teach me business habits, you know, and that was—*intolerable*. But I see the good of all that, now that I have bought this lovely picture."

"Does it not need a frame, Joanna?" young Hendall asked, with a generous desire to add to her happiness.

"Is that all you can say for it?" cried Joanna, indignantly.

"Surely it is saying much to imply that it is worthy of a frame," replied Arthur, with ready tact. "To be loud in praise is to be commonplace," he added, sententiously.

"Is it?" said Joanna, pondering this axiom deeply, for she saw that it might be useful to her, some day, when she should come to mingle in the world. "Perhaps you are right; it does need a frame," she said, presently, studying the picture critically with her head on one side.

"Then do let me give you a frame!" cried Arthur, impetuously. "I have never yet given you any thing worth keeping; let me give you a frame—"

He stopped suddenly, checked by the expression of Joanna's face; for she had risen, and was standing, looking at him with rebuking eyes.

"No, thank you," she said, with a stiffness that made her appear years older—"no, thank you, Mr. Hendall, I could not."

"You never accept any thing from me," said Arthur, piqued.

Joanna blushed.

"Oh, yes," she said; "you forget the flower-seed."

"Flower-seed!" repeated Arthur, impatiently. "What do flower-seed amount to? And didn't you remind me cruelly that you would be planting them in my—in soil not your own?"

Joanna hung her head.

"That was unkind, my little friend," continued Arthur, throwing prudence and all his aunt's counsels to the winds. "After I had told you, too, that this should always be your home," he continued, with tender reproach. "Now, little Joanna, to heal my wounded feelings, let me give you the frame."

He tried to take her hand, but Joanna recoiled, trembling; she felt instinctively that Miss Basil would not approve, and, besides, she had her own ideas of propriety, and she meant to adhere to them. She would have been very peremptory, if she could have found her voice; but a strange fear and a strange wonder possessed her so that she could only shake her head dumbly.

"But why?" persisted Arthur. "I mean why not?"

"Our—our circumstances—are different," said Joanna, folding her hands with dignity, and looking at him with a sort of pathetic appealing in her large, dark eyes. "I could not—"

"O Joanna!" said Arthur, reproachfully.

"If I were a young lady in society, Mr. Hendall," she began, with great deliberation; but suddenly stopped short, coloring painfully.

"If you were a young lady in society?" repeated Arthur, expectantly. From some cause or other, the opinion of this young lady who was not in society interested him deeply.

But Joanna hardly knew what she would say. Arthur's manner, his words, the tone of his voice, full of a new significance, gave her a sense of strangeness, delightful per-

haps, from its novelty, but too perplexing to be endured.

"You—oh, you have spoiled the pleasure of my picture for me!" she cried, suddenly; for, indeed, she knew not what else was the matter, to make her so strangely uncomfortable. "Why did you—*open this discussion?*"

With a swift, unexpected motion, she snatched the picture from the bench, and before young Hendall could master the surprise caused by this little outburst she was far down the walk. He called to her in vain; Joanna would neither wait nor turn back, for she desired nothing so much at that moment as to be alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

A REVELATION.

JOANNA went at once to her own little room. She wished to be alone; but she did not wish to think about Mr. Hendall, nor what he had said, nor how he had looked; she was afraid, she knew not wherefore: so she took a pin from her toilet-cushion, and, fastening her treasured picture to the wall, she sat down in front of it, her hands clasping her knees, her dainty, fresh, and piquant face upturned—a pleasing picture herself, had any one been by to see.

But there was no spell in "The Bluebird's Nest" to bar all thought of Arthur Hendall, and Joanna really did not see the picture upon which her eyes were fixed as she sat pondering in her very young head the distressing question, Had she been cruel and disdainful in rejecting the picture-frame, or had she acted—commendably? It was a question to be decided by herself alone, for she wouldn't have Pamela know her thoughts—how very, very silly they would appear to the wise Pamela! Joanna, pressing her hands against her burning cheeks, wished Pamela were not so wise, or that she herself were wiser, for what did all her silly, fluttering heart, she could not tell.

And then the door opened abruptly, and Miss Basil looked in with a much-perturbed countenance.

"Mercy preserve us, child!" she exclaimed, in a tremulous voice that matched her anxious face, "what are you doing there? I've knocked *and* knocked! Mrs. Basil has sent for you."

"O Pamela!" cried Joanna, starting up in dire confusion. "I—I was *contemplating* this picture. See, 'Mela, is it not beautiful?"

Miss Basil hardly vouchsafed it a glance. Could she have surmised what a confession Joanna had to make about that bit of cardboard, she would not, it is true, have regarded the picture more favorably, but she certainly could not have looked upon it so indifferently. "Looking at pictures is an idle waste of time," said she, coldly, "excusable only in children. I never could see any good of them; but if you must stick that painted box-top up there, don't waste your time gazing on it."

"Box-top!" gasped Joanna, indignant. "Pamela"—she had opened her lips thus far with a desperate resolve to let her inappreciative cousin know what a price had been paid for that "box-top;" but Miss Basil, unconscious of what she did, checked the revelation with the curt words:

"No time, now, for one of your arguments, Joanna. Make yourself nice—it is Mrs. Basil's wish—and go down to her immediately."

"Nice" was Miss Basil's idea of full dress. As soon as she had delivered this command, she shut the door, and Joanna was left alone with her "feelings." Between the indignation excited by the ignominious misnomer applied to her treasure, and the surprise caused by "the grandmama's" unexpected summons, she was in a state of excitement that interfered sadly with the performance of her toilet. She put on a fresh muslin in trembling haste, tied a ribbon around her refractory locks; then, unable to adjust her collar to her satisfaction, she ran to Miss Basil's room to ask for aid.

The door of Miss Basil's room was ajar, and Joanna was arrested on the threshold by the sight of her cousin, in her best dress—a plain, somewhat worn black silk—saying her prayers in her accustomed corner.

Joanna shook with a superstitious thrill. The sight of Miss Basil saying her prayers after nightfall, or before the dawn, was not alarming; but "something dreadful must surely be going to happen," she thought, "when Pamela takes time to dress up and say her prayers in broad daylight." But Joanna did not tremble long at the sight. "I dare say," was her sober, second thought, "she is only praying that I may be relieved

from the bonds of vanity and presumption; that's the way she *characterizes* me." So she pinned her collar as best she could, and went down-stairs.

In the hall she met young Hendall. Nothing was further from this young man's wishes, so he assured himself, than to engage the little Joanna's artless affections; yet her little airs of distance and reserve wounded his vanity far more than the studied slights of any young belle with whom he could wage an equal warfare.

"Stay, stay, Joanna!" he cried, stretching out his hands to bar her progress. "Stay one moment; I—"

"But, indeed, Mr. Hendall, you must not *detain* me," said Joanna, shrinking away. "The grandmamma has sent for me."

"My aunt!" exclaimed Arthur, dropping his hands and recoiling. "Why has she sent for you?"

"Is it a strange thing that she should send for me?" said Joanna, with rather a lofty air. "I assure you, she often does." But she blushed when she said this, for, though it was true that Mrs. Basil, upon one trifling pretext or another, did often send for her husband's granddaughter, she had never before accompanied her summons by any message relative to dress, and Joanna could not escape the conviction that the injunction to make herself *nice* augured something of importance to herself—perhaps the long-desired introduction to society.

"Joanna!" exclaimed Arthur, impetuously, seizing her hands, and speaking in an excited whisper, "if my aunt—that is, if you—if your feelings—if—"

Joanna heard him, her eyes growing larger and larger, and her breath coming quicker and quicker, until the sound of a man's step in the room across the hall interrupted this incoherent speech. Arthur dropped her hands abruptly, and she, with surprise in voice and manner, said:

"I do not understand you, Mr. Hendall."

"It is nothing," Arthur said, turning away hurriedly, and muttering to himself that he was a fool; and Joanna, after a moment of bewildered hesitation, passed on her way, in a strange flutter at the thought that possibly Mr. Hendall was in some way concerned in "the grandmamma's" message.

Mrs. Basil was in the sitting-room, which now was made to serve all the purposes of a

parlor. A cheerless apartment it was—a dingy carpet was on the floor, worn, old-fashioned pieces of furniture stood at decorous right angles in their fixed places, and the severe old family-portraits frowned on the sober-colored walls. There was nothing bright to be seen here, except the honey-suckle and the sunshine at the open window.

Near this window Mrs. Basil was seated in a sort of state—her draperies disposed with care, her ivory-headed staff beside her, her dainty hands folded in her lap, and an expression of studied blandness enthroned upon her countenance.

Opposite her stood, or rather moved, a young man, tall, vigorous, sunburned, with brown hair and beard, and large blue eyes. His face lacked the perfect contour and delicate finish that distinguished young Hendall's; but it was, nevertheless, a pleasing face, at once expressive of strength and tenderness.

"Twelve years is a long time in the life of a man of twenty-eight," he was saying, as Joanna entered; "and—" but, looking up, with a sort of restless expectancy, instead of finishing his sentence, he started abruptly toward her.

Joanna recognized, instantly, the gentleman she had seen at Carter's, and, thinking that he might be one of Mrs. Basil's numerous relations, and remembering how ready *that Miss Ruffner* had always been to report her misdoing, she quickly decided that the object of his visit must be to reveal the extravagance of which she had been guilty. Her first impulse was to run away; but, as she stood a moment, hesitating, the stranger, advancing, held out his large, shapely hand, and said, with a kindly smile:

"The little Joanna, I know. But she hardly remembers me, I fear."

"Oh, yes," answered Joanna, who, having conquered her cowardly wish to flee, was now ready to encounter, with her usual straightforward courage, whatever this unlooked-for visit might portend. "It is not so very long since we met."

"It is longer than you can realize, child," said Mrs. Basil, indulgently. "This is Mr. Basil Redmond, Joanna, your grandfather's kinsman and namesake. It is some years since he left us; yet I suppose you must remember him, as we all do."

She made this assertion with a confident air, as though she defied contradiction.

Basil Redmond's arrival had followed so closely upon the hint of his coming, that there had been no time to prepare for the kind of reception Mrs. Basil had desired to give him. She had, it is true, essayed without delay the task of breaking the momentous tidings to Miss Basil—a task not to be undertaken, she felt, without some trepidation. For now that Basil Redmond had become of importance to herself, though twelve years had gone by, she could estimate something of the agony of mind poor Miss Basil had suffered at the time of his departure.

When once her own personal interest was touched, Mrs. Basil was not incapable of sympathy; and, having to announce young Redmond's expected return, it struck her as a strangely painful fact that, during all the years of his absence, Miss Basil had never alluded to him in any way. But if Miss Basil's rigid silence in regard to the young man struck Mrs. Basil as something strange, she thought it stranger still when she found that Miss Basil was well informed about his movements. When Mrs. Basil, anxious to avoid a scene, having with careful diplomacy paved the way for disclosure, and almost trembling in anticipation of the effect her news must produce, announced that Basil Redmond might return to Middleborough any day, Miss Basil replied, composedly:

"Yes; he will be here to see me to-morrow."

Not another word on the subject did Miss Basil vouchsafe; and the self-respect of a Hendall forbade Mrs. Basil to give expression to the curiosity she felt.

But, when young Redmond came, his first demand was to see Mrs. Basil herself; and she, having been all her life a stickler for precedence, found herself regarding him now with some warmth of feeling. She would fain have had him believe that his name had been fondly remembered by the household of Basilwood; Joanna's manner, in spite of her statement that it had not been so very long since they had met, seemed to disprove this.

"She *has* forgotten me," Redmond said, with a sigh. "It is not strange; she was so very young when I left here, and I have been away, you remember, rather more than twelve years."

"And you are a kinsman?" said Joanna, giving him her hand, rather shyly.

"Oh, yes," he said; "I am a kinsman; but, indeed, I do not know what our relationship is exactly, not being good at genealogies."

This he said turning to Mrs. Basil.

"Ah, the judge, were he living, could settle that question, I fancy," said she, graciously. "But you young people don't keep up family connections so strictly as we did in old times. The judge was proud to have you bear his name; he always predicted well of you; and I am sensible that you are on the way to verify his predictions."

Her own predictions she prudently ignored.

Redmond bowed and smiled, but made no attempt to disclaim.

"But then, indeed," continued Mrs. Basil, with amiable condescension, "none of the Basils are without talent. You remember what the judge himself was in his palmy days; and our good, retiring Pamela is undeniably a woman of wonderful executive ability.—By-the-way, Joanna, child, how Pamela lingers! Is she not coming down?"

"I suppose she is," answered Joanna, naively. "She is all dressed in her black silk."

Redmond smiled; Mrs. Basil coughed; and then, happily, to fill an awkward pause, Miss Basil, "moving with a silken noise," appeared upon the scene.

There was an innate ladyhood about Miss Basil that nor care, nor poverty, nor hard work, could obliterate; but she could not receive Basil Redmond after his twelve years of absence with the stately self-possession that never forsook Mrs. Basil. Always nervous in company, she was, on this occasion, most unbecomingly agitated. Her thin lips twitched, her hands trembled, her eyes blinked painfully at the sunlight that streamed through the window; yet she seemed to put great restraint upon herself, and no other sign of emotion escaped her.

Mrs. Basil, relieved of all apprehension of a scene, looked at her, and thought that Pamela had chosen her calling wisely since her talents were not of a kind to render her an ornament to society. Joanna looked at her, and wondered how 'Mela could be so uncomfortable and so unhappy in her best clothes. Young Redmond alone seemed to enter into her real feelings. Hardly less agi-

tated than herself, he ran toward her, and clasped her in his arms; and it was several seconds before either could speak.

"I am sure, I am sure that you have never forgotten me," he said, in trembling accents.

"No, my dear boy," Miss Basil answered, almost in a whisper; "that was impossible."

"And I should have known you anywhere!" he exclaimed, oblivious of every other presence. "I am sure I should—in spite of change."

Poor Miss Basil's self-command almost gave way at this. She could not say a word; she could only look at him with a strange, pathetic smile, the tears gathering in her faded eyes. Twelve years had changed her boy into a great, strong man, good to see; but *she* would not have known *him* anywhere; and she felt, sadly, in the midst of her joy, that time had defrauded her of something no future could restore.

"Oh! oh!" thought the little Joanna, jealously, "Pamela is good enough to me, surely; she never forgets to dose me when I'm sick; but she never smiles on *me* in that *devouring way*; I'm only a girl!"

Mrs. Basil rose politely. She remembered that she herself had not been unmoved by Arthur's coming, though she did hope that she had maintained a well-bred composure.

"I will retire," said she, graciously. "But, Mr. Redmond, I beg, I insist, that you consider yourself entirely at home in this house. I regard you as one of the family."

Mr. Redmond gravely bowed his thanks, and Mrs. Basil passed out of the room with the air of having performed a magnanimous action.

A silence followed. Deep feeling cannot find expression in fluent speech. The little Joanna, moved by an indefinable jealousy, had taken her seat on a low stool at Miss Basil's feet, and, bewildered by all she saw and heard, sat still in her place, casting from under her lowered brows furtive gleams of distrust at the stranger.

At last Redmond spoke:

"How very gray she is! I should not have known *her* anywhere. And yet she is not changed."

"No," Miss Basil answered. "Mrs. Basil is—just the same. And yet you asked to see her first," she added, reproachfully. "Was

she so good a friend of yours in days gone by?"

"I can afford to forgive and forget the past," replied young Redmond, proudly. "And do you not understand that I could not approach you suddenly? See, we tremble still."

"But it is for joy," said Miss Basil, stretching out her hand to him. "Ah, my boy! my boy! you always had a good heart; far be it from me to embitter you." But she had not forgiven Mrs. Basil yet.

"Then we need not speak of Judge Basil's widow," Basil Redmond said, as he took her outstretched hand, "we that have so much else to talk about!"

"Yes; it is twelve long years *and five months*," said Miss Basil, with bitter emphasis. She was one of those who, after reaching the shore, "would count the billows past." But she turned her eyes upon the young man with a look that gave Joanna a jealous pang; and the poor child impulsively placed her hand upon Miss Basil's knee, as Redmond moved his chair nearer. "Pamela is mine, and I am hers," she said to herself, indignantly. "What right has he to come between us?"

Neither Miss Basil nor young Redmond divined her jealous thoughts; they forgot her presence, indeed; and the little Joanna, herself, presently forgot her displeasure as she listened to his story of a life in the distant West.

But not long was her jealous heart at rest; for soon, to her unutterable amazement, she learned that in some remote town of that remote, great country, in which she found it hard to believe as a reality, Pamela, *her* Pamela, once had lived! Her hand, that rested lightly upon Miss Basil's knee, nervously clutched the worn black silk; but Miss Basil was all unconscious of the touch. She was leaning forward, listening so eagerly to the stranger.

"You went back *there*?" she said, excitedly. "Oh, my boy! you did not write me of that?"

"No," young Redmond answered, quietly; "I thought it best to wait. I could tell you about that visit so much better than I could write." And he seemed to speak with peculiar significance.

"But it is years—*many* years, since I left there," said Miss Basil, turning her face

away, and wringing her hands nervously. "I must be forgotten—oh, yes! quite forgotten, like a dead man, out of mind." She seemed to be talking to herself; but Redmond answered gently:

"No; there are some who remember you; one, indeed, who knows all—your story."

Miss Basil started at this, and so also did Joanna; but in Miss Basil the start was succeeded by an uncontrollable tremor, while the little Joanna's first quick thrill of unutterable surprise was followed by the rigidity of despair.

Miss Basil's face, as she leaned forward, looking eagerly into the young man's eyes, seemed transformed by struggling thoughts and feelings, to which she dared not give utterance. She evidently wondered, yet dreaded to ask from whom he had learned her secret, and how much of it he really knew; and the little Joanna's mobile features, after one swift glance as swiftly averted, at her Pamela's altered countenance, became stony. This stranger of a day—for Joanna could not regard Basil Redmond otherwise than as a stranger—actually knew Pamela's story; and she, the child of Pamela's adoption, had never even suspected that this prim, precise, elderly, and matter-of-fact woman, who preached so strenuously against youth and its follies, *had* a story! By no word or sign had it ever been revealed to her that Miss Basil had known any other life than the daily, prosaic routine of the grandmamma's household; yet this man knew it! The little Joanna felt cruelly wronged.

"You—but no, no; you cannot know *all*?" Miss Basil said, with a vain attempt at a smile that ended in a gasp, as her relapsed figure sank back upon her chair. "It is—a thing of the past, and best forgotten."

But Joanna heard not. She had taken her hand from Miss Basil's knee, not hastily but deliberately, sorrowfully, and Pamela had not missed it! With the quick intuition of passionate sympathies, she felt that Pamela did not miss her touch; and, although the removal of her hand was, in effect, a renunciation, Joanna's resentment of this indifference was keen. "I can bear this no longer," she said to herself, as she rose abruptly and left the room, passing out upon the piazza through the open French window; and neither Miss Basil nor young Redmond heeded her departure.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNEXPECTED COMFORT.

JOANNA stepped from the piazza into the broad walk leading down between the weed-grown flower-borders to the thrifty cabbage-beds where old Thurston was resting on his hoe. With childish petulance she wreaked her vexation on the tall white lilies, snatching at them, and scattering them ruthlessly as she passed; but she who had been so ready to weep over her unsatisfactory attire, had now no tears wherewith to relieve the keen anguish she felt at the necessity of renouncing Pamela; for, to her morbidly wrought-up feelings, this seemed to be the step forced upon her by all she had heard that morning—she must renounce Pamela.

The perception that Pamela and herself were incongruous had been slowly dawning upon Joanna for some time past; but while recognizing this unwelcome truth most reluctantly, her heart had never swerved from its allegiance to her exacting cousin, in spite of many differences of opinion. There had been times, often of late, when Joanna acknowledged to herself, with sore distress, that she could never give the stolid, stoical, excellent Miss Basil the genuine confidence of her heart; struggle as she might, she could not resist this desolating conviction. Yet Miss Basil was the one human being to whom she clung with a sort of repressed, defiant ardor of affection. Even when most at variance with her, Joanna had taken comfort in the thought that nothing could change Pamela; that to her, at least, she must always be the same unfailing, prudent, reliable counselor, if not a consoler.

It was no slight shock to discover that this reticent, unimpressible Pamela, with whom she was impatient every day, was not the Pamela she knew; not the indispensable, inalienable adjunct of quiet, humdrum old Basilwood, but a person wrapped about in mystery, who had lived in a far-away country, who had a "story," like people in books, and who had lived a different life from this in which Joanna knew her. Basil Redmond's startling revelation had destroyed for her Miss Basil's identity. She felt as though her Pamela had died and given place to some one she did not know; and poor Joanna thought remorsefully of her harsh

kindness, her faithful fault-finding, her stern piety that had no sympathy with human weakness.

And yet Joanna knew that Miss Basil's vigilance and invective would continue just as heretofore. "She will retain all her rights over me," she mused, moodily; "but I shall have none over her. She has kept her life a secret from me—from *me*, as though I were nobody, and less than nothing to her! And if 'Mela doesn't care for me, who *does* care for me?"

Joanna had betaken herself to her favorite alcove, and was sitting there, staring vacantly into the garden, seeing nothing, and in her wretchedness quite unconscious of the flight of time. But at this stage of her unreasonable reflections, she chanced to turn her eyes upon the slender stem of the mimosa-tree immediately in front of the alcove, where, to her intense surprise, she beheld, freshly cut in the greenish-brown bark, her own name, JOANNA.

It was as though the tree had found a tongue and spoken to console her; and her thoughts were turned abruptly into a new and pleasant channel. At first she stared incredulously; then she rose and deliberately traced the letters with her finger, as though she would have the sense of touch corroborate the testimony of her eyes: this done, she quietly sat down again, leaning negligently forward with her hands in her lap, and contemplated the epigraph with a pleased smile, her cheeks burning with the conviction that none but Arthur could have carved it there. She did not attempt to conceal from herself that she took a supreme pleasure in the certainty that this was his work; yet she could not have told why she felt unwilling that any one should see it but herself.

How long she sat there in dreamy abstraction she did not know; the sun was burning fiercely, but she was in the pleasant shade, and a soft breeze was fanning her. But, after a time, the sound of approaching footsteps awoke in her heart a wild wish that the name staring at her so persistently would vanish. She knew that it could not be Arthur that was coming, for she had caught sight of a black dress through the shrubbery, and she surmised that it must be the grandmamma, taking a noontide constitutional, as Dr. Garnet had lately advised,

"Wait until the sun has dried the dew," said the doctor, "and then walk in the shade. Exercise! Exercise! that's the thing." So Mrs. Basil raised her second-best parasol, that was beginning to split, and went out every day, just about the hour that the garden lost its attraction for Arthur, that is to say, when Joanna herself went in-doors; for Miss Basil did not approve of the noontide sun. Knowing this, how could Joanna suppose that the ever-busy, methodical Pamela would be walking a round-about way through the garden at that hour of the day merely to see *that stranger* to the gate?

With a sudden impulse, of which she was afterward heartily ashamed, Joanna slipped the blue ribbon from her hair and tied it around the tree so as to hide the telltale name. "The grandmamma," she knew, would never stay to disturb any of her fanciful arrangements; and, having fastened the ribbon securely, she fled.

The pair approaching the alcove were too much absorbed in each other to see her. "Here," said Redmond, "is the spot where I came to study. How familiar and yet how strange it looks to me now! I had thought surely to find this little nook much more spacious. That tree, I remember, I planted with my own hands. How it has grown!"

"It has been twelve years"—Miss Basil began; but, before she could add the five months, she caught sight of the blue ribbon. "Joanna is incorrigible!" she cried, in a totally different voice. "A brand-new ribbon to be abused in this way!"

Young Redmond laughed. "Why, the child must be lonesome," said he, "to make a playmate of a tree. What an odd freak!"

"Odd freak?" repeated Miss Basil, tugging angrily at the obstinate knot in the ribbon. "Culpable extravagance, I call it! I shall never be able to make—Gracious heaven!" she interrupted herself in a voice of utter dismay, as the name in the bark stood revealed. "It is just what I expected!" she cried, vehemently. "That young Hendall—" Poor Miss Basil paused, powerless to express herself. "O Basil, don't you see? What shall I do?" Habituated though she was to self-dependence, her pleading voice and look showed unmistakably the ineffable comfort she felt in having someone to apply to in this extremity.

Her broken hints gave Basil Redmond a sufficiently clear understanding of the little pastoral comedy of which Joanna was the heroine; but what should he, a young man, know about the management of girls?

"Poor little Joanna," said he, compassionately. "Don't scold her just for a ribbon."

Perhaps, all things considered, no wiser advice could be given, yet Miss Basil, for all her unquestioning faith in "her boy," shook her head dubiously. "You don't know Joanna," she said. "A vast deal of supervision that child requires. I have striven faithfully to bring her up in the way she should go; but she is turning out as little like me as if she had never known my care."

"Poor little Joanna," said Redmond. "She is as much a child as when I left her years ago. I knew her the moment I saw her; I felt sure it was she, though I was not expecting to see her."

"Why should you not have been expecting to see her?" Miss Basil asked, in rather an injured tone. "You knew Joanna must be with me."

"It was not here that I saw her first; it was over in the town at Carter's."

"Joanna! What was she doing at Carter's?" Miss Basil asked, incredulously.

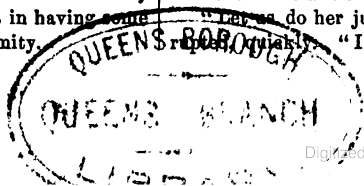
"Why, oddly enough, she was anticipating me in a purchase I wished to make myself. I was going about reviewing the town, *incognito*, you see—and, by-the-way, not a soul I met knew me—when I was attracted by a picture in Carter's window—a picture of a bluebird's nest—that in some way reminded me of the little playmate I had left twelve years ago, and I wished to buy it for her."

"Ah!" murmured Miss Basil; she was not quite sure whether she approved or not.

"But," continued Redmond, "while I lingered over some paper I had asked to see, Joanna—my little playmate herself—came in and actually bought the very picture."

"It is not possible!" said Miss Basil, with irritation. "But it is just Joanna's way—to be wasting money on pictures; and then wasting time looking at them. I tell you, Basil, you must help me watch over Joanna for the judge's sake—he was good to you, whatever Mrs. Basil may have been."

"Let us do her justice," Redmond interposed. "I can understand, now



what a trial I must have been to such a woman; and I think, after all, that what you call her want of forbearance had not a little to do with making a man of me."

"As if it was not in you to make a man of yourself!" remonstrated Miss Basil, proudly.

"Perhaps it was the thought of you more than any thing else," he said, affectionately. "The thought of you has influenced all my course, and saved me from many a temptation."

"It is because you have a good heart, my boy," Miss Basil said. The merit should be entirely his; she would have none of it.

"I had ever before me," continued he, "the hope of one day making your life the happier for me—you who were so good a mother to me in my motherless childhood."

"My life has always been the happier for you, Basil, my boy," said Miss Basil, turning her face away. "It is enough—it is all I ever hoped, if I do not need to part from you again. I can hardly bear, even now, to have you leave my sight."

They had arrived at the gate now, and Redmond took her hand.

"Never fear," he said, cheerfully. "You shall be reinstated in all your rights—"

"O Basil! don't! don't!" she entreated. "It was the good old judge's advice to let my sad, sad story die with me. Push it no further—you do not know what it involves."

"But if I can bring proof?" he urged.

A wild light gleamed for an instant in Miss Basil's faded eyes, but it died quickly.

"So much of my life is gone—" she said, slowly and sorrowfully.

"We shall see!—we shall see!" he said, encouragingly, as he walked away.

"Dear, beloved boy, what would he do?" Miss Basil asked herself, uneasily, as she stood watching him through gathering tears. "Heaven guide, I pray; Heaven will guide him, I know; and Heaven's will be done! But can any good come of revealing that miserable story? Alas! it is now too late! too late! Better it should die with me."

She brushed away a tear at this; and, rolling Joanna's ribbon round her finger by way of smoothing it, walked back to the house in meditative mood.

"What to do with Joanna I do not know," she mused, as she went. "Her heedlessness is unaccountable, considering

her training. I must have a talk with Basil about that Arthur Hendall; he shall advise me. As to Joanna—how *could* she throw away money upon a trumpery picture, when money is so scarce? I must give her a talk about her wastefulness and her extravagance; but I'll not scold her, I'll reason with her. Basil knows best, and I won't scold her."

Necessity, not Nature, had made Miss Basil self-reliant; and Nature reasserted herself the moment the spur of necessity was removed.

Meantime, while Miss Basil was lingering with young Redmond at the gate, Joanna, returning from the garden, flushed and panting, and going through the hall as the nearest way to her room, was not a little startled to meet Mrs. Basil, whom she thought she had left in the neighborhood of the mimosa-tree.

"Child, I was seeking you," said she, blandly. "Come to my room; I have something to say to you."

Joanna, her heart beating loudly and painfully, followed without a word, unable to understand why she should feel like a culprit.

"Joanna," said Mrs. Basil, gravely, seating herself on the old sofa that filled up a corner of her room, and motioning Joanna to a faded ottoman opposite, "you cannot remain a child forever."

"No," answered Joanna, not knowing what else to say.

"And I can do very little for you, Joanna."

"No, grandmamma," said Joanna again, very meekly.

"If," pursued Mrs. Basil, with a sigh—"if I had the means I once had, I should take both pride and pleasure in introducing you as the judge's granddaughter into society."

"Yes, grandmamma," said Joanna, echoing the sigh.

"But at least I will gladly do what is in my power. I shall have company to dine with me next Thursday, and I wish you to be present."

Joanna started. Was she in a dream? Was she really to attend one of those rare entertainments Mrs. Basil sometimes gave, of which she saw only the wrong side? Her renunciation of Pamela, the name on the mimosa-tree, the ribbon she had tied over it—all went out of her head; but the all-im-

portant question of dress, never long absent from the mind of dawning womanhood, was on her lips in an instant.

"What should I wear?" she asked, timidly; half in hope, half in despair.

Mrs. Basil, smiling, rose and unlocked her wardrobe; and, taking thence the great green box, she displayed, with some ceremony, the fleecy white polonaise, with its billowy frills and puffs, the gorgeous Roman sash, the fan, the rich but wofully yellow lace handkerchief; and Joanna, comprehending without words that all this array was for her adornment, actually went down upon her knees in artless adoration of finery.

"For me?" she sighed, with profound satisfaction.

"For you," said Mrs. Basil, almost wishing that she had been actuated solely by an interest in the judge's granddaughter.

"Oh, how good, how very good, you are to think of me!" said Joanna, with ardent gratitude, but still keeping her eyes riveted upon the adorable polonaise.

"Joanna," said Mrs. Basil, impressively, laying her hand upon the shoulder of the kneeling girl, "I am old, and I have some old-fashioned notions. I do not like to see young people *forward*. I hope that you will remember your extreme youth, and not expect particular attention."

"Oh, yes!" cried the grateful Joanna, eagerly. "I will never speak, unless I am spoken to."

Mrs. Basil smiled, and laid the polonaise with its accompaniments back in the box.

"Take it to your room, child," said she, giving it into Joanna's eager hands, "and be sure you have a skirt sufficiently long to wear with it."

A needless injunction; for Joanna was at that moment even running over in her mind various expedients for converting her apple-green challis into a demi-train. If only there had been some one to sympathize with her, and assist her, in her feminine solicitude about this matter of the demi-train. She could not trouble the grandmamma about that; and Pamela would be sure to moralize about pomps and vanities. Nevertheless, Joanna was eager to display her new possession to Miss Basil, and to proclaim the honor in store for her. Oh, if that strange man down-stairs would only go away and leave Pamela at liberty!

However, she was at no loss to pass away the time. She took down the green challis skirt, and disposed the white muslin over it, tying the sash about the waist, and laying the handkerchief and fan across the lap.

Surveying the effect critically, there was no denying that both fan and handkerchief were yellow—decidedly yellow; but then the carving of that ivory fan, it was *superb*; and the lace—why, it was *real point, point d'aiguille*, Joanna knew, for she had heard Miss Ruffner say so once when Mrs. Basil had displayed it for criticism; and Miss Ruffner, *she* knew all about dress—not a doubt of that! Joanna's satisfaction, but for her solicitude about the demi-train, would have been complete

CHAPTER XV.

POMPS AND VANITIES.

Nor long did Joanna stand thus in rapt contemplation of her finery, her head drooped on one side, her finger on her chin, before Miss Basil appeared in the doorway.

She held in her hands the blue ribbon, from which she was still endeavoring to smooth out the creases, preparatory to the delivery of a wise speech in which she meant to reason with Joanna; but having caught sight, first of the display on the bed, and next of the great, green box with Lebrun's name in staring capitals, she stopped, dumb at the first word.

What new revelation of Joanna's incomprehensible character was this? Had she not the promise that a child trained up in the way she should go, should *not* depart from it? Yet here was this child, whom from infancy she had trained with unsparing pains, already departing into the ways of pomps and vanities, and hankering after the state of a fine lady, to which it had *not* pleased God to call her. It was enough to destroy one's faith in the wisdom of Solomon. Her literal mind could never comprehend that the way in which a child should go must be a way conformed to the just demands of youthful spirits. When we begin to use crutches we are apt to condemn dancing.

"Joanna," said she, in a voice hoarse and tremulous with indignation and dismay, "I demand the meaning of all this!"

"O 'Mela!" cried Joanna, clasping her

hands in ecstacy. "It means that I am going to the dining!"

"You are going to destruction!" cried Miss Basil, remembering the reckless extravagance Joanna had been guilty of in buying so useless a thing as a picture—doubtless she had not paid less than a dollar or two for it. "Where is your folly to end?" she cried, making a dash at the green box. "Have you been running up accounts, you reckless girl? These things must be returned immediately, do you hear? I say, *immediately!*"

"O Pamela!" said Joanna, with mingled anger, mortification, and reproach. "How can you go on so? The grandmamma herself gave these things to me, that I might—make a creditable appearance at her dining next Thursday."

"Next Thursday? Next Thursday, child? Did I hear you aright?" Miss Basil asked, with keen interest. "I wonder Mrs. Basil hasn't named the day to me, and this only Saturday. But you are dreaming, surely?"

"No, indeed!" answered Joanna, shrill with exultation; "*next Thursday!* And," she continued, triumphantly, knowing well that Miss Basil would never oppose "the grandmamma's" expressed wishes, "I am to have my skirts a *proper* length, a demi-train—at last!"

Miss Basil should have felt flattered by Mrs. Basil's interest in poor little Joanna, but she resented it as an injury. "Dear, dear, dear," she said, plaintively, "Joanna, how often must I tell you that this world is all a fleeting show? but you never will believe me."

"No," said Joanna, sturdily; "not while you say that, 'Mela.'"

"True happiness—" began Miss Basil.

"True happiness," interrupted Joanna; "I know what it is; it is going to a dinner-party in a brand-new polonaise. 'Mela, there are three yards left of that green challis; I can have a founce.'"

"No, indeed, Joanna," said Miss Basil, sternly; "those three yards are to make new waist and sleeves."

"But I don't want new waist and sleeves; I want a founce," said Joanna, piteously.

"Your heart is set upon the vanities of dress, and I am not going to encourage you," said Miss Basil, resolutely.

"But I care a great deal more about the

founce, *not* having it, than I should if I had it," argued Joanna, not inaptly.

"I dare say," replied Miss Basil, dryly. "Here is this ribbon, a new ribbon, wantonly abused." Joanna, who had not noticed the ribbon before, started, blushing vividly. "Your head is turned," pursued Miss Basil, thinking, O most lame and impotent conclusion! that she had gained a great advantage. "Your head is turned; and it is not hard to guess who has turned it."

"Pamela," said Joanna, with unaffected innocence, "if you mean that my head is turned by the dinner-party, I tied that ribbon on the tree before the grandmamma gave me those things."

But Miss Basil could never understand her. "Why did you tie the ribbon there?" she asked, sternly.

"'Mela, you know," said Joanna, appealingly. Poor child, she hardly knew, herself; but some blind instinct of womanhood made her appeal to a woman's sympathetic intuition.

"Why should you wish to hide your name in that way, you silly child?" Miss Basil asked, determined to have an explanation of what was inexplicable.

"I suppose it was silly," said poor Joanna, the tears starting to her eyes, "but—why are you so harsh, Pamela? What wrong have I done? It was no fault of mine that Mr. Arthur Hendall carved my name on the tree."

"It was he, then?" said Miss Basil, her eyes flashing.

"Of course it was," replied Joanna, with innocent decision; "who else could have done it?"

"And it was *my* tree, mark you, my tree, that I cherished," said Miss Basil, in a choking voice.

"How can it possibly be your tree, Pamela," said Joanna, calmly, "when you have told me, over and over again, that every thing here belongs to Mr. Arthur Hendall?"

Miss Basil rose abruptly and walked across the room. She did not like the taste of this fruit of her own planting; but she felt that it would never do to make wry faces over it. Returning presently, she asked, not without a touch of scorn:

"I suppose you are flattered by it?"

"I liked it—yes," answered Joanna, slowly, and coloring.

"Joanna," said Miss Basil, under conviction that now was the time for the word in season, "I am your truest friend, and I tell you he means nothing by it."

"Of course he means nothing by it," said Joanna, in mild astonishment. "How was he to tell that you cherished that particular tree? I am sure I didn't know it. Cutting my name there is just an empty compliment, you see, not to be compared to—an *eventful* present like this lovely polonaise. And if you are indeed my truest friend, O Pamela, consider, consider the founce, and what an advantage it would be."

What could a woman like Miss Basil say to a girl like this? If Joanna could not be made to see the folly of cutting up for founces the material that had been so carefully saved for waist and sleeves (and the child did outgrow her things so!), how could she be made to understand the significance or the insignificance of having her name cut in the bark of a tree by a vain and idle young man? "Oh, of course, Joanna," said she, sourly, "it is useless to talk common-sense and economy to a girl that throws away money on a trumpery picture."

"Trumpery picture!" said Joanna. "Mela, you don't know; it is a valuable possession. Do you know what I paid for it?"

"More than it is worth, I don't doubt," said Miss Basil, dryly.

Then Joanna began to tremble, and to wish that the picture had not come under discussion just when the green founce was about to create a crisis.

"What *did* you give for it?" Miss Basil asked, laying aside her assumed indifference when she saw that Joanna wished the subject dropped.

"I gave my gold-piece," said Joanna, rather reluctantly.

Had she said that she had given but a dollar, Miss Basil, who had made it the study of her life to avoid all useless expenditure, would not have spared invective; but so remorseless an extravagance as this transported her economical spirit beyond all bounds.

"You surely never threw away five dollars in that way?" she gasped. "You'll go headlong to destruction with your imprudent waste of money. Joanna, Joanna! What shall be done to you? Five dollars for a trumpery picture to stick against the wall, and you so desperately hard on shoes!"

"It was my own money," said Joanna, sturdily.

"So much the worse!" retorted Miss Basil, illogically. "Will you never learn to husband your resources, foolish child! Don't think I shall permit that trash to hang there!"

"Pamela," said Joanna, deliberately, "you can't bring back the five dollars *that* way; and, if you do any harm to my picture, I'll go away to foreign parts, and you shall never hear of me." (Joanna had long ago discovered that this threat invariably brought Miss Basil to reason.) "I'll die and be buried under alien skies, and the place of my—my sepulchre you shall never know!"

"Don't think to prevail with me by such idle threats, Joanna," said Miss Basil, visibly moved. "It ought to be a matter of principle with you to deny your eyes the gratification of that picture, at least until by persevering diligence you shall have atoned for such extravagance."

"Turn it to the wall, then, 'Mela," said Joanna, penitently, "if you think I have done so wrong."

Miss Basil always felt it to be her duty to preach severe doctrines to Joanna's awakened conscience.

"I do, indeed, think so," she answered, gladly availing herself of the unlooked-for permission to turn the picture to the wall. "You have been guilty of criminal extravagance—yes, *criminal*, for money is a trust, whether it be ours in large or in small sums. If you don't feel your responsibility in little things, you will never be able properly to appreciate it in great things. Self-indulgence will be your bane. Let this be a lesson to you—"

"Now, 'Mela," cried Joanna, with tears in her eyes, "don't! I can't be sorry that I bought the picture; no, I am glad, for it does make me happy to look at it. Pamela, can't you see that I must have something to—to *nourish* my aspirations?" she asked, pathetically. "We do need something more than food and raiment in this life."

"Yes," assented Miss Basil, readily enough, for the "spirit of preach" was strong within, and she could seize any text; "steady principles, a sound faith—"

"'Mela," said Joanna, with doleful weariness, "all that has nothing to do with the founce to my green challis."

"I see it is no use talking to you, Joanna," said Miss Basil, with a sigh. "I suppose you must do as you please when your heart is so set on a thing; but I hope you'll never regret the founce."

"*That* I never will!" said Joanna, positively, and springing up with alacrity. "I must go at once to work at it."

"Joanna, surely you forget," remonstrated Miss Basil, gravely. "This is Saturday, and work like that is no preparation for to-morrow."

"But my week's mending is all done," said Joanna, innocently.

"I am not thinking of the week's mending, child," said Miss Basil, solemnly, "but of the duties of religion."

"You don't suppose I am going to sew on it to-morrow?" asked Joanna, half ready to cry, accustomed though she was to Miss Basil's opposition to the pomps and vanities.

"You might as well sew on it as have your head and heart full of it."

"Oh, dear, Pamela! don't you see that if I can just *familiarize* myself with the—the idea, my head and my heart will both be the more—*discumbered* by to-morrow?" asked Joanna, imploringly.

"Ah, child," Miss Basil answered, with a telling sigh, "what would become of you, I wonder, if I were to leave you wholly to your own devices?" Joanna thought in her heart it might not be so bad for her, but she said nothing; and Miss Basil continued: "But a day will come—yes, a day will surely come, when you'll remember, with tardy gratitude, maybe, how I've carried your waywardness on my heart all these years."

And without a word of interest in Joanna's first toilet, she went away in the comfortable consciousness of having performed her duty unshrinkingly.

"I know what all that means," said poor little Joanna to herself, a tear rolling over her cheek;—"it means that she will pray for me at intervals all day to-morrow; but it would do me a great deal more good, I should feel more—Christian placidity, if she would only help about my founce."

This child that Miss Basil had trained so carefully from infancy seemed destined in every way to be a perpetual source of surprise and bewilderment to her anxious guardian. Whether she went in the way she

should go, or whether she departed therefrom, she was forever doing some unexpected thing. The next morning being Sunday, Joanna, to the confusion of Miss Basil's private anticipations, came forward as usual, with simple, childlike solemnity, to recite the Church Catechism and a hymn, as she had been accustomed to do ever since she could remember.

But then Miss Basil could not divine how little distasteful this exercise was to Joanna, who had always, happily for her, associated it with the impressions derived from an old pictorial Bible, with its rude engravings of Moses in the bullrushes, Elijah raising the Shunamite's son, Daniel in the lion's den, Ruth among the stocks, the Babe in the manger, the Marys at the tomb—pictures that, in spite of their crudity, impressed her childish heart with a deep sentiment of religion that she, poor child, failed to recognize as religion, because it was opposed to Miss Basil's creed of sackcloth and ashes.

It was because her Sunday lesson helped to keep alive these early impressions that Joanna never was willing to miss reciting the Catechism and the hymn, more especially as Miss Basil permitted her to select the hymn herself, which unwonted wisdom was attributable to the fact that Joanna would memorize just three times as many lines of her own selection. Although Miss Basil's taste inclined her to prefer such strains as

"Life is but a winter's day, a journey to the tomb,"

she could tolerate any thing that passed under the name of sacred poetry; and she honestly thought "the more the better," particularly in Joanna's case.

And Joanna liked going to church, where she sat, not in her grandfather's pew, close to the pulpit, but up-stairs in the gallery with Miss Basil, who had always sat there in a remote corner. Joanna liked going to church, not so much because it was her one stated contact with the outside world, as because, from her dim corner facing the chancel-window, gaudy with colored glass, she had early learned to believe in the church as the gate of heaven; and, sitting there, she was thinking far more in her simple, childlike faith, of God and his angels than Miss Basil ever knew. But religion was, as yet, only a sentiment with Joanna, and Sunday was blissful chiefly because on that day Miss Basil did

not believe in work, and she could be idle with impunity.

But Sunday passed, and Joanna's thoughts reverted to the flounce of her green challis. It was for her an arduous undertaking, yet she knew that it was vain to expect sympathy or assistance from Miss Basil, who, indeed, was too busy about more important matters to attend to any such trifle. However, by dint of diligence and perseverance, the demi-train, with its flounce, was finished early on Thursday morning, and Joanna, having nothing more to do, beset poor Miss Basil with suggestions about the table, the dishes, the silver, the flowers, and even about old Thurston's "department."

Miss Basil was a much-enduring woman, but her endurance failed at last, and she curtly reminded her officious adviser that it was none of her dinner-party. Joanna had almost fancied that it was, and upon this home-thrust she returned to cool her enthusiasm with a shower of tears. Why was Pamela so unfeeling? Why was she always so indifferent? And poor, harassed Miss Basil was asking herself what she should do to shield this thoughtless child from the deceitful snares of the world.

It would be hard to say which was more to be pitied in this state of mutual misunderstanding, but Joanna had at least this advantage over Miss Basil: she could forget every vexation in the contemplation of the marvelous puffs of her polonaise.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF SOCIETY.

NEVER had a day seemed so long to Joanna as that memorable Thursday. The dinner-hour was half-past five, and she thought the time to dress would never come. At last, afraid of being late, she began the preparations for her toilet; but when all was done, finding that it was but a little past three, she carefully undressed again, for fear of crushing that billowy *enfleur*, which was, in her eyes, the chief merit of her costume.

There was no one to give the gracious finishing touches, no one to assure her that all was right, no one to take a pride in her appearance. Poor little Joanna felt this; yet not to such a degree as to mar her satisfac-

tion in the demi-train with the flounce, notwithstanding the fact that it did not "hang evenly," and was too full here and too scant there; defects that Miss Basil's more skillful hands might easily have remedied, could she have seen how much better a little judicious interest on her part would have been for Joanna than all the lectures on pomps and vanities she could devise.

Hearing the clock in the hall down-stairs strike four at last, Joanna concluded that any longer delay in completing her toilet would be inadvisable, and she put on again the lovely polonaise, with many admiring glances at the glass, and many little caressing pats of adjustment, that must have been the result of a natural instinct, for certainly she had not learned these ways from Miss Basil.

As she was tying her sash, it occurred to her suddenly that she might never have so good an opportunity to display certain jewels of her mother's, relics of departed grandeur, that Miss Basil kept under lock and key. Knowing that she would have to contend the point, and haunted always by that fear of being late which is the torment of the novice, she hastened to Miss Basil's room, but Miss Basil was not there. She ran, breathless, down to the dining-room, but Miss Basil was not there. Rushing aimlessly through the hall, she encountered old Thurston, who was waiting to admit the guests.

"Miss J'anna," said he, with respectful solicitude, "ef you isn't uncommon keeful, somebody'll tread on your dress and *elapse* the gathers."

"I shouldn't mind it at all," said Joanna, with a lofty air. Proof so indisputable of the length of her train could hardly fail to give her satisfaction, and she proceeded gravely to practise the difficult art of managing her flowing draperies, unconscious that she had Basil Redmond for an amused spectator.

He had come early, that he might see Miss Basil before the arrival of the other guests—thus far he was willing to make himself at home at Basilwood—and he was now waiting in the sitting-room, the door of which was open, affording him a view of Joanna in all her glory.

"But, Thurston!" she exclaimed, suddenly quitting the contemplation of her trailing robes, "no one has come yet, I hope?

Where is my cousin; I must see her instantly!"

"Miss Pamela? she's not come down yet, and nobody is come except Mr. Redmond, as I remember him, a harum-scarum boy to disappear, and then come back without warning, as nobody wouldn't know him, so growed he is—"

"Oh, what do I care for *him*?" interrupted Joanna, with an impatient shrug. "It's Pamela I want."

Just then Miss Basil came down the stairs, rustling in her silk dress, and smiling with a brightness so unwonted that Joanna, for the moment, forgot the request she wished to make.

"O Pamela!" she cried, with unaffected delight, "and you, too! you are to be at the dining?" Never, since she could remember, had Miss Basil appeared at the grandmamma's dinner-parties; but to her artless mind there was no other way of accounting for Miss Basil's smiling countenance.

"No, child," answered Miss Basil, decidedly, as she put Joanna aside without noticing her dress; "you know that I never take part in any thing of the kind; don't detain me; some one is waiting to speak to me."

"But, O Pamela, one moment!" cried Joanna, her thoughts reverting perforce to herself. "I am all ready, except my jewels."

"Jewels?" repeated Miss Basil. "What do you mean, Joanna?"

"My jewels," repeated Joanna, impatiently. "O Pamela, you know! The rubies and pearls that were my mother's. Oh, please, there is no time to lose; and you said they should be mine!"

"When you are a woman grown, child," said Miss Basil; and then, with hesitating approval, she added, "You look well enough as you are."

"I am no child," said Joanna, upon whom admiration so tardy made no impression; "don't you see my train?"

"You are detaining me," said Miss Basil, with a slight flush of annoyance; "and some one is waiting to see me." They were at the sitting-room door now, and Basil Redmond came forward, smiling.

A frown, quick and angry, darkened Joanna's face. Here was this stranger, again, standing between Pamela and herself. What right had he to smile in that way? Yet she

could not help feeling that there was something kindly in his smile, vexatious as it was to hear Pamela appeal to him.

"She does not need ornaments, so young as she is?"

"*So young!*" Hateful words to Joanna, by which she knew that this appeal was indicative of a determination not to indulge her vanity with the rubies and pearls.

Redmond, hesitating just a little, turned to the table upon which stood a vase of white geranium, and, with that smile Joanna in her heart called "masterful," said:

"If this young lady will permit a suggestion from me, these would be the prettiest ornaments she could wear."

He spoke with some diffidence, holding out to her a spray of the flowers; and Joanna half-relented toward him because he called her a young lady! She was most anxious to conduct herself with becoming propriety, now that she stood on the threshold of society; but she was at a loss to know what a young lady should do under such circumstances. She cast an imploring glance toward Miss Basil, a glance that plainly asked, "What *ought* a young lady to do when a gentleman offers flowers?" But, receiving no sign by which she could be guided, she shyly put forth her hand and took them, with very much the manner of a child.

She was conscious that she did not appear at her ease, and, misinterpreting the smile that passed between Miss Basil and Mr. Redmond, she would have returned his offering instantly, but that, to her great surprise, Miss Basil started forward with a sort of shy impulsiveness, and, before Joanna was well aware of what the prim woman would do, the geraniums were pinned in her hair.

Very stiff and ungraceful they stood bristling, but there was no mirror at hand to betray to Joanna their aggressive *altitude*; and the mere fact that Pamela would do this much for her adornment gave the child a pleasure in the flowers that compensated for the disappointment about the jewels.

The next moment, before her first surprise had subsided, in came Mrs. Basil, leaning on her ivory-headed staff, like an old fairy godmother; and, after a most gracious greeting to Basil Redmond, as if wonders were never to cease, she turned admiringly to Joanna, and expressed a smiling approval of her appearance; then, "Permit me, child?"

said she, with polite formality, and with an airy touch, the stiff cluster of geraniums in Joanna's hair was gracefully adjusted.

No time was there for more; the guests were arriving. Miss Basil, murmuring inaudible words of regret, hastily retired; Mrs. Basil, with some ceremony, conducted Mr. Redmond to the large drawing-room (so seldom used now), whither Joanna, with a feeling that life was just beginning, followed eagerly, her heart beating, her knees trembling far more than the poor occasion called for; old Thurston, full of the dignity of his office, forgot his rheumatism, and strode majestically to the door, as if the good old times had come again; then the people entered, and from that moment all was confusion to the inexperienced neophyte, who, long before it was over, found this tedious dinner-party a weariness to the spirit and the flesh.

To begin with Mrs. Basil's relations, though they were the last to arrive, there was Miss Ruffner, elaborately dressed, and serenely conscious of her own perfection; Mrs. Ruffner, her mother, all bugles and bangles, a stout, plain, good-natured, maladroit, insignificant woman, with a word in season and out of season—especially out of season—for everybody; Mr. Sam Ruffner, indolently smiling and showing his handsome teeth; and, lastly, old Mrs. Stargold, who was received with a flutter of satisfaction, not by Mrs. Basil alone, but by all the assembled guests. When the little crowd that hemmed her in fell away, Joanna saw a feeble little old lady, whose face bore the unmistakable signs of an anxious mind. Warm as was the day, she was richly dressed in black silk, with a lace scarf, that threw into the shade every other toilet in the room. Her voice shook when she spoke, and her hands trembled so, whenever she attempted to adjust her scarf, that Miss Ruffner, or Mrs. Ruffner, or Mr. Sam, would rush to her assistance. Joanna wondered what pleasure this poor old lady could find in life.

There were a few people in Middleborough whom Mrs. Basil delighted to honor when she gave one of her rare dinner-parties, and besides Mrs. Stargold and her suite there were present on this occasion Mrs. Carl Tomkins, a woman of exceptional culture, according to the verdict of Middleborough; Mr. Carl Tomkins, a gentleman eminent in the life-assurance business, but overshadowed

in society by his wife; old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, ancient, deaf, and garrulous; Miss Caruthers, a pretty, somewhat *passée* young lady, who had been invited for Mr. Sam Ruffner's behoof; Dr. Garnet, the loud, aggressive man of medicine; nervous little Mr. Leasom, of St. John's; and portly Chancellor Page, remarkable for silence and appetite. There were no young companions for Joanna; Arthur was there, indeed, but he took good care not to attach himself to her, for he felt his aunt's eyes upon him, and he obligingly devoted himself to Mrs. Stargold. So Joanna sat in a corner looking on, rather glad, indeed, to escape the notice of so formidable a company.

In such a party, nothing of any moment ever happens before dinner. Every one then is in a state of dull and decorous expectation, and a little girl in a corner is liable to be overlooked and ignored. It was a relief—it always is a relief—when dinner was announced. Before Joanna could penetrate the mystery of the magical ease and celerity with which each gentleman, without clashing with his neighbor, selected some particular lady, a voice at her side said:

"Joanna, I am to have the pleasure of taking you in to dinner."

It was Basil Redmond; and Joanna, though conscious of a little disappointment that it was not Arthur, felt a quick thrill of delight at the unexpected distinction of being "handed in" to dinner. She remembered such things in books she had read, and her color rose, her eyes sparkled with the thought that she was now indeed about to enter upon the delightful realities of life. With one passing sigh for poor 'Mela's "sad exclusion from the doors of bliss," she put her hand on Mr. Redmond's arm, and walked, she knew not how, to the dining-room.

Dinner, to which she had looked forward with considerable anxiety of mind, as the great ordeal that should stamp her future fitness for society, passed off smoothly enough; there were no failures, there was no awkward *contre-temps*, no lack of every thing needful. Nothing of this kind, however, had she feared; she knew that Miss Basil, who was behind the scenes, would have every thing perfect, and that old Thurston could be implicitly relied upon; for his pride was up when Mrs. Basil gave a dinner, and he made his assistant, hired for the occasion, feel that

it would not do to merit his wrath. What Joanna doubted was her own ability to perform her part creditably, a doubt that quite deprived the poor child of appetite. It was not possible, of course, that she could be guilty of any barbarism, for Miss Basil had been very strict in teaching the proprieties of ordinary life; but Miss Basil dined without ceremony, and poor Joanna was haunted by a terror of transgressing the formidable etiquette of dinner-parties, of which she had a dim but colossal idea. She might have spared herself all anxiety, however; for between Miss Caruthers, who absorbed Mr. Redmond on the one side of the poor little *débutante*, and Miss Ruffner, who engaged Mr. Carl Tomkins on the other, Joanna attracted no attention.

After dinner she drifted back into her corner again; but here she was no longer so fortunate as to escape notice. Mrs. Paul Caruthers espied her, and, puzzled by a face she had not seen half a dozen times, she turned her best ear to Mrs. Carl Tomkins, inquiring, in an audible whisper, who she was. Mrs. Carl Tomkins appealed to Mrs. Ruffner, who, with good-natured eagerness to gratify innocent curiosity, mildly roared the information that she was "old Judge Basil's granddaughter." All eyes were immediately turned upon the blushing Joanna.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" said Mrs. Paul Caruthers, who, being old herself, and done with folly, invariably pitied all young people.

"Not so *very* poor, I fancy," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins. "That queer Miss Basil, who is never seen, except at church—" (Was Pamela, then, *queer*? Joanna knew that her excellent cousin was strict and exacting; but to hear the slighting judgment of the world pronounced upon her thus was a shock.)

"Sh—h!" said good-natured Mrs. Ruffner, with loud sibilation, for she saw Joanna's telltale face.

"A woman of good, sound sense," amended Mrs. Carl Tomkins, promptly. "She has shown it by taking out a policy for the benefit of that child." On the subject of life-assurance, Mrs. Carl Tomkins was thoroughly imbued with her husband's views.

"You don't tell me so!" exclaimed Mrs. Ruffner, forgetting all about Joanna. "Where did she get money to pay the premium, or *tever* you call it?"

"She saved it, I suppose," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins. "She's been saving for years."

"La!" exclaimed Mrs. Ruffner, incredulously. "How *could* she save out of a bare living?"

"Management," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins, briefly.

"Let me into your charming circle, ladies, I entreat!" cried Miss Caruthers, rushing across the room with a pretty, juvenile air. "The gentlemen are discussing cotton and politics, subjects inevitable among gentlemen; and I, alas! have not, like Mrs. Basil, and Miss Ruffner, and Mrs. Stargold, the intelligence and *experience* to appreciate those topics. I know *you* must be talking about something within my comprehension?"

"Do be quiet, Aurelia!" said Mrs. Paul Caruthers, inclining her good ear. "I can't hear what's going on."

"Oh, don't *you* come here, Mr. Ruffner!" cried Miss Caruthers, shaking her head playfully at Sam, who had sauntered lazily after her. "Here's gossip, and gentlemen hate gossip."

"Go on, Mrs. Tomkins," said Mrs. Paul Caruthers, impatiently. "Don't mind Aurelia. What's that about a man's age? *Whose* age?"

"I was speaking of a *WOMAN'S MANAGEMENT*," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins, raising her voice irritably, as some people are apt to do when the deaf fail to hear. "My dear Mrs. Ruffner, it is Mr. Tomkins's opinion that every woman in the South might insure her life for somebody's benefit, if she would exercise a little forethought and management, like this Miss Basil now. Like the great Sully, she is 'fertile in resources.'" But who the great Sully was, nobody in that company, except Mrs. Carl Tomkins could have told. However, people felt rather flattered when she made an allusion they could not understand, and they listened attentively. "Everybody knows that Miss Basil sells vegetables and fruits in the town; and she makes wine; she sells a great deal of blackberry-wine, I'm told."

"Would *you* drink blackberry-wine, Mrs. Tomkins?" asked Mr. Sam Ruffner, making a face.

"Oh, you funny man!" cackled Miss Caruthers. "Why, plenty of people drink blackberry-wine, *now*; it's *cheap*. And Miss Basil makes it—"

"Speak softly," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins, glancing around. "Remember where we are. Yes, Miss Basil, like the great Sully, is 'fertile in resources;' and I've heard that she has a romantic history."

"What is it, pray?" cried Mrs. Ruffner and Miss Caruthers, eagerly. "Do tell us."

"What *are* you saying?" groaned Mrs. Paul Caruthers. "Everybody speaks so indistinctly, nowadays."

"La! why doesn't your aunt carry a trumpet?" said Mrs. Ruffner, impatiently, to Miss Caruthers; but she leaned forward with good-humored alacrity, and whispered to the old lady so loudly that poor little Joanna, hemmed into her corner, heard every word. "Miss Basil, you know, ma'am; they say she has a very romantic history."

The old lady gravely nodded her thanks to her informant; and, turning with owl-like deliberation to Mrs. Carl Tomkins, said:

"I've heard as much hinted before."

And then the five heads, Sam Ruffner's included, drew together, and "*Bus—bus—bus*" was all Joanna heard, until old Mrs. Caruthers impatiently pushed back her chair, and exclaimed:

"That amounts to just nothing at all! I thought you had some reliable information. Nobody believes in any thing that comes from Lebrun's—unless it's bonnets."

Mrs. Carl Tomkins, turning aside to Mrs. Ruffner, rolled her great eyes expressively; and then the conclave broke up.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MEDICINABLE GRIEF.

JOANNA had no very clear recollection of any thing that occurred after this; she saw and heard as in a confused dream. She was vaguely conscious that everybody gathered around old Mrs. Stargold, to hear her repeat, at Miss Ruffner's artful suggestion, the *true* story about the burglars; but Mrs. Basil's anxiety to have Arthur's prowess recognized, and Miss Ruffner's determination that he should be ignored as far as possible, were lost upon her, utterly guileless as she was. She sat dejected in her corner, wishing, wearily, that the end were come, when suddenly Mrs. Basil called her.

Mrs. Ruffner was responsible for bringing

her thus prominently into notice. "La!" said that good-natured busybody, plucking at Mrs. Basil's sleeve, "do you know, now, I wouldn't pin that child into a corner so!"

"I do not 'pin her into a corner,'" said Mrs. Basil, reddening. "She is naturally retiring—" But as she was about then to call Joanna, Mrs. Ruffner checked her.

"Let me ask you," said she, mysteriously, "do you know for what sum that Miss Basil of yours has insured her life?"

Mrs. Basil stared; she could not help it, she was so astonished. "No, I do not," she said.

"Very likely you didn't know even that she has insured her life? But she has—for that child's benefit," said Mrs. Ruffner, triumphantly. She did enjoy telling news, especially unexpected news.

"Miss Basil is a very prudent, far-seeing woman," said Mrs. Basil, taking to herself great comfort in the thought that *this*, then, was what Pamela had meant by saying that she would provide for Joanna's future; it wasn't a match with Arthur that she had had in contemplation, after all. But why should Pamela have kept her plans such a secret from her, as if she took no interest in her husband's granddaughter?

"And what is this about her having a romantic history?" continued Mrs. Ruffner, eagerly. "I suppose you know all about it? It seems, Lydia Crane says—"

"I never listen to Lydia Crane," said Mrs. Basil, quickly, and flushing at the recollection of her last interview with that gossip. Then she called, peremptorily, "Joanna, child, come here, and speak to Mrs. Ruffner."

"Oh!" thought Mrs. Ruffner, "I see there's something in it, but she doesn't choose to tell."

"Poor thing! she is very young," said Mrs. Paul Caruthers, as Joanna came forth from her corner at Mrs. Basil's bidding.

And then every one immediately remarked that she strongly resembled the judge, her grandfather. Mrs. Ruffner good-naturedly patted her cheek, and called her "a quiet little mouse." Miss Ruffner was surprised to find her grown so tall, and admired her polonaise (with a doubtful glance at the chalis skirt). Miss Caruthers asked if she had learned the new lace-work. Sam Ruffner, with his sleepy eyes half shut, said something nice and foolish about the flowers in

her hair. But attentions, that might have won Joanna's heart that morning, had no effect upon her now. Her absent looks, her unwilling smiles, her inadvertent answers provoked and mortified Mrs. Basil, who would have been pleased to have the judge's granddaughter reflect a little credit upon the judge's widow.

How the day ended, Joanna never knew. When the guests were all gone, she stole sadly out into the garden, oblivious of the dew that threatened ruin to the puffs of the marvelous polonaise; for, much as Joanna delighted in dress, she was more indifferent to it than Miss Basil's economic soul would have approved, when any deeper question engaged her. White organdie, and a demi-train, could fill her careless moments with supreme bliss; but they were powerless to console a desolated heart.

Mrs. Basil and Arthur were on the porch, in the shadow of the vines; Joanna heard them talking as she passed. "A dinner-party is a tremendous bore," said Arthur, with a yawn.

"One must perform one's duty to society," said Mrs. Basil, with a sigh.

In the dining-room Miss Basil was lamenting over the great waste of material; Joanna heard her, too, as she passed under the windows, and she thought, sadly, "There is no real joy in life."

The anticipation of the dinner-party, the care of preparing her dress, had held in abeyance, for the time, the jealous uneasiness that had sprung up at Mr. Redmond's allusion to Miss Basil's past life; but her pleasurable excitement in the little foretaste of society was wearing off, the fairy gold was turning to moss and stones in her hands, when Mrs. Basil's guests began to discuss the same subject; and all the pain at finding that she had known Pamela only in disguise, revived, intensified by the thought that every one knew her truly except herself.

Many and many a time had Miss Basil told her, when compelling her to read religious works against which she revolted, that the wisdom they contained would recur to her in seasons of trouble, and fill her with comfort; but Joanna, now that she had ceased to believe in Miss Basil as the Pamela she had always known, was hardly surprised to find that this was not true. The memory of the pages she had blistered with impatient

tears was any thing but a comfort, now that, unable to reason about the trouble that so cruelly beset her, she could only feel. But she was glad, she knew not, questioned not why, to remember the quaint old pictures in the great Bible on the dusty shelf of the garret—she thought of Joseph, patient in the pit; of the infant Moses afloat in his frail ark; of Daniel, kneeling undismayed among the hungry lions; and then, as the summer moon rose up and made "every common bush afire with God," Joanna dropped upon her knees, and hid her face in her hands. Her plaint did not shape itself in words, hardly even in definite thought; but these dumb orisons of the heart express our needs better than words, sometimes; and presently, when a mocking-bird in a neighboring thicket burst into rapturous song, she rose from her kneeling posture, calmed, if not consoled, and began to awake to the beauty of the summer night.

The rushing of the little brook through the ravine beyond the fence sounded loud in the still moonlight; the breeze rose and fell dreamily, laden with the heavy odors of jasmines and honeysuckles, while ever and anon the mocking-bird uttered its passionate strain of rain-like melody, giving to the garden a weird, unreal aspect. Joanna hardly knew her own familiar haunts in this soft moonlight, for Miss Basil, with a wholesome dread of night-air, had always strictly forbidden her to remain out after the dew fell.

And Miss Basil, with the protection of a ragged old nubia over her head, was coming now in search of her. She had expected to find her in the neighborhood of the mimosa-tree; but Joanna stood leaning on the brick-work vase, over which the verberna had now grown rank, and hung tangled wildly.

"O Joanna, Joanna!" said Miss Basil, querulously, "I've been looking for you everywhere" (which was not strictly true). "How imprudent you are; out in the night-air with nothing on your head! Don't you know I've warned you, over and over again, about miasma? And quinine three dollars and a half the ounce!"

"Well, 'Mela,'" said Joanna, the old habit of antagonism asserting itself as usual, "you don't need to give me an ounce for a dose, ever."

"And this polonaise; you reckless child!"

exclaimed Miss Basil, running her long, thin fingers over the limp muslin with the scrambling rapidity of a father-long-legs. "Brand new, and perfectly stringy with the dew!"

"Only pomps and vanities," said Joanna, bursting into tears. "O 'Mela!"

The cry was sharp with anguish.

"There, child, there," said Miss Basil, relenting. "I'm not scolding you; I'm past that. I suppose you must always have some one to look after you. Tie this handkerchief over your head and go to your room. I'll see what can be done to remedy it."

"Nothing but p-pomps and—vanities," sobbed Joanna; "and this world is all a fleeting show, as you told me, 'Mela; but I wouldn't care if only you were true to me."

"Mercy guide us, child!" exclaimed Miss Basil, impatiently; "what nonsense are you talking? I am glad to see that you've come to a reasonable sense of the world's ways; but you mustn't abuse good clothes, for that is sinful extravagance."

Joanna did not say another word. She tied the handkerchief over her head with meek obedience, and went up to her room so quietly that Miss Basil was thoroughly appeased. "She has had enough, I see, of this thing they call society," the much-mistaken woman thought. "I shall hear no more of demitrains."

But Joanna, quietly as she got herself to bed, could not compose herself to sleep; the shadow that had arisen between Pamela and herself haunted her so persistently; if Pamela only would come and put it aside forever! After what to her seemed interminable hours, she called, softly:

"Pamela! Pamela!"

Miss Basil's room was across a little entry, and the doors between were open. Now, to Miss Basil, any call in the night-season meant illness, and she was always quick to respond.

"Did you call, Joanna?" she questioned, anxiously; and the next moment she came pattering across the bare floors in her list slippers. "What is the matter?"

Joanna was sitting up in bed.

"Pamela," said she, tremulously, "I cannot, cannot sleep. No; my head does not ache"—putting away Miss Basil's hands—"the trouble is, you are not yourself any longer; you are somebody else."

"You've got the nightmare, child," said

Miss Basil, giving her a little shake. "I charged you not to eat that salmon salad; it was entirely too rich for you."

"I didn't eat it; I ate no dinner at all," said Joanna; "and it's not the nightmare."

"Then it's an empty stomach," said Miss Basil, with decision. "Joanna, when you know how thoroughly I disapprove of going to bed on an empty stomach, I wonder you did not ask for something to eat before this."

"But I am *not* hungry, 'Mela. You talk to me about an empty stomach when my heart is breaking."

"Joanna! Joanna! what foolishness have you been listening to to-day?" cried Miss Basil, shaking her now in good earnest. "It is all pure fancifulness, and I shall just give you a good dose of valerian."

"No, no, 'Mela; no valerian for me; but stay and tell me if it is foolishness, this that I have heard to-day!" cried Joanna, throwing her arms around Miss Basil, who was about to go in search of her medicine-chest.

"What do they mean, this stranger that I never heard of before, and all these Middleborough people, when they talk of your—*your story*? O 'Mela, that you should be a woman with a story, and—another life out West, when I believed in you so! When I thought you had always belonged to only me and Basilwood!"

Miss Basil was powerless to interrupt this outburst. She understood clearly enough that Joanna must have heard something that half revealed the sorrowful story she had thought must die with her; but how? Through Basil Redmond's inadvertence, she could not doubt; and she had relied so upon his discretion! She was utterly unconscious of the fact that Joanna had been present on the day of his first visit, when he had startled her so by the announcement that he had learned her story. He had begged to hear it in detail from her own lips; and she was glad, now, to remember that, though she had told him the truth, she had not told him the whole truth. How much of her past history Joanna knew she could not guess, and would not ask. Hers was not a confiding disposition. In Joanna's excitement she could see nothing but a querulous, illegitimate curiosity, that it was her duty to curb. She knew not what golden sympathy she was sacrificing to this ruthless "dutiolatry." Yet, for an instant, Nature was stronger than

the sense of duty, and she asked, with a tremor that Joanna was quick to note:

"What stranger do you mean, Joanna?" And then, with the instinct of precaution, she added, "But you are talking wildly."

"But I am not talking wildly, 'Mela, you know, for you tremble. I mean this stranger who comes here and thrusts himself between you and me, with his story about your past, that these people have taken up—this Basil Redmond that I never heard of before."

Miss Basil gasped and paused. Then her sense of duty came to her rescue and gave her words. This untoward inquisitiveness must be checked peremptorily, she decided.

"Joanna, I will not have any more of this—I will not!" she said. "Have I not explained to you that Basil Redmond is no stranger; that he lived here under this very roof as a boy; that his grandfather was your grandfather's second cousin? Could any thing be plainer? Don't speak of him in that way; he's my best friend, and yours. And whatever you may happen to overhear, don't snatch at words here and there to build fanciful notions upon about a body's past life. It is unbecoming. But I'll fix you with a dose of valerian, and I hope you'll wake up in your senses! You should endeavor to curb curiosity; it leads to mischief, it is idle and sinful."

"O 'Mela, it is not idle curiosity—idle curiosity never yet gave any one the heart-ache. If you would only stay and hear me patiently!"

But Miss Basil was gone, glimmering like a ghost in search of the valerian; and presently she returned, bearing a bottle, a spoon, a glass, and a spluttering candle.

"He's not my best friend," said Joanna; "he comes between you and me as no one else ever did. You can put on your best dress to see him; yes, and you can find time to talk by the hour with him, to walk with him about the garden in the busiest time of day, and not call it idleness." Now that the floodgates of her distress were opened, every petty grievance clamored for redress.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Basil, pausing in counting the drops. "Don't interrupt me, Joanna."

"'Mela, I don't need that stuff!" Joanna remonstrated, piteously, as Miss Basil calmly put the glass to her lips, saying, inexorably:

"I am the best judge; you *do* need it; it

will make you sleep, and you will forget your foolish vagaries."

"Shall I?" said Joanna, with an hysterical sob, as she swallowed the contents of the glass. "Shall I, indeed, awake to-morrow and find it all a dream? O 'Mela! I do feel *so old* since that day *he* came." She clasped Miss Basil in her arms as she spoke; but Miss Basil, with a movement of alarm, thrust her patient back upon the pillow, saying, excitedly:

"Joanna! Joanna! I knew that your foolish head would be turned. You are talking nonsense. You need not pin your faith to Arthur Hendall because he carves your name on a tree."

"*He* is not the one that makes me feel old!" said Joanna, impatiently; "it's that Mr. Redmond, with his influence over you."

But Miss Basil's suspicions were not to be parried by this thrust.

"I tell you," said she, thumping the pillows excitedly, "*I don't* believe in him. When I was a girl—"

"Yes, 'Mela," said Joanna, starting up with eager interest, as Miss Basil paused, abruptly. "Tell me! It would comfort me so to know about when you were a girl!"

"Nonsense!" answered Miss Basil, turning away. "It is but idle curiosity, child. Go to sleep, or I shall have to be giving you another dose."

Poor Joanna sighed deeply, but said no more; and Miss Basil, picking up her candle, vial, glass, and spoon, hastened to her own room; but sleep did not soon visit her pillow. "What did all these rumors and whispers portend?" she questioned with herself, as she turned restlessly from side to side. Basil's hoped-for return had not brought her the peace she counted upon. "I see," sighed Miss Basil, wearily, "I must caution the boy; he is young, and youth is indiscreet. He must learn silence."

And Joanna, gathering up in her mind Miss Basil's disjointed utterances, was saying to herself, "If he is indeed my truest friend, I will make him speak; I have a right to know."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ASK ME NO MORE.

JOANNA awoke the next morning with a start. It was very late; the burning summer sun shone hot upon the garden, and at the gate, which could be plainly seen from her window, stood a little open buggy, with a valise strapped behind. At the first sight of the vehicle she rubbed her eyes, believing herself in a dream; but when she looked again, there it was still, with a hungry-looking horse in the shafts; and old Thurston seemed to be mending some part of the harness with a piece of twine. The temptation to inquire into this was too strong for Joanna; she dressed as quickly as she could and ran down into the garden.

"That's the Griswolds' buggy, Thurston, I know, and their horse, too. What is it doing here, with that valise strapped behind?"

"It's a-waitin'," answered old Thurston, with aggravating slowness of speech. "Hey! you, I say!"—this to the horse, an inoffensive brute, "of his port as meke as is a mayde"—"mind what you 'bout!" Old Thurston, conscious of possessing interesting information, was bent upon enhancing its importance by a dignified reserve in regard to the buggy.

"Never mind the poor old horse," said Joanna. "He is quiet enough. What is that buggy here for? Have they sent for my cousin? What is the matter this time?" These last questions were in reference to the Griswolds, who were a sickly set, always making demands upon Miss Basil's skill in "doctoring."

"Not to my understanding; no, Miss J'anna, they've not sent for Miss Pamela," answered old Thurston, with Afric dignity. "The Griswolds are 'bout as usual, nothing more than general want of thrift. But Black Hawk, he's dead lame with constant riding of the madam to visit her relations, and that's the way we are beholden to the Griswolds." The Griswolds evidently did not command old Thurston's deepest respect.

"Beholden to the Griswolds for what? I wish you would say, Thurston—if you know?"

Thurston looked at her, with mild reproach in his dim old eyes.

"In course I know, Miss J'anna," said he,

in a deeply-injured tone. "Wasn't the telegraph delivered into my hands primarily?"

The ominous word possessed no terror for Joanna, who had no one out in the world to be anxious about.

"Telegram, you mean," said she. "What telegram?"

"It was to call Mr. Hendall away," answered old Thurston, indifferently.

Joanna received the information dumbly. Over the sun there seemed to come a sudden cloud, a mist that overshadowed not the garden only, but the whole future. Was life, after all, to be nothing but the same dull old story it had always been? In the shadow of the cloud Joanna had caught a glimpse of her own foolish heart, and she shivered.

"For what is he going?" she asked, presently.

"He'll be going to seek his fortune, it's likely," said old Thurston, briskly. For him the sun was shining just as usual; rather more brightly, perhaps, in anticipation of the fee from Arthur's liberal hand.

And Arthur was coming down the sloping walk at this very moment. He had said good-by to his aunt on the porch, which was hidden from the gate, as though he was eager to be off; yet when he saw Joanna he began to find it hard to leave Basilwood, with the still midsummer shadows, the faint, midsummer murmurs from the parched grass, and that life of "dreamful ease."

"So you are here to see me off, Joanna—Miss Joanna, I should say, now that you have made your *début*?"

"No," answered Joanna, avoiding his eyes; "I did not know, until this moment, that you are going."

"At least you are not glad to have me go?" said Arthur, holding out his hand.

"You know I am not glad! How could I be glad?" answered the artless Joanna, turning away her telltale face.

"The sun is mounting, sir," said old Thurston, respectfully, "and your conveyance is all in order."

Influenced by the wish to stimulate Arthur's memory in regard to the reward he coveted for his services, the old negro had been bustling ostentatiously around the rickety buggy, like a wasp that cannot determine upon which side of a peach to settle, until finding that Arthur's attention was not to be attracted by such lively manifestations

of concern about the gear and the springs, he resorted to speech.

"All right, Thurston," said Arthur. "Are you to drive me?"

"No, sir; that honor's not for me, sir," said old Thurston, bowing low with exaggerated politeness. "This buggy doesn't b'long to our establishment, as you may see, sir; and they've sent a boy to drive you.—Hi, you! wake up, wake up there!" This, with an utter change of voice and gesture, was addressed to a small negro that, with the somnolent facility of his race, was fast asleep in the glare of the sun. "You black rascal! To forget your manners and go to sleep in the 'tendance of a gentleman!"

From which reproach it will be readily seen that Thurston belonged to the old school that believed in manners.

"What time does the train leave?" asked Arthur, looking at his watch—"the Westport train?"

"Now pretty soon, sir," said old Thurston, with eagerness.—"The sun is scorching your skin, Miss J'anna."

As long as she stood there, old Thurston thought, Mr. Hendall never would remember his justly-earned recompense.

But Joanna did not care for the sun; she was as brown as a berry already.

"Why must you go?" she asked, timidly. "Is not Basilwood your own?"

"No," answered Arthur, hastily, and coloring. "Basilwood is my aunt's, you know, 'the grandmamma's,' as you call her" (putting the ownership in this way did not seem so much like robbing Joanna), "and a man must go out and battle with the world," he continued, grandiloquently. "It is business that takes me away."

"For how long?" asked the artless Joanna, with more interest than any woman of the world would have dared to show—unless she had been absolutely indifferent.

"That I cannot tell," answered Arthur, lowering his voice, so that old Thurston, who was vigorously berating the little drowsy driver, might not hear. "But don't forget me, Joanna," holding out his hand. "Don't let that Mr. Basil Redmond make you forget me."

"I—I don't understand you," she stammered, shyly, giving her hand, but quickly withdrawing it. The next moment she had turned away, leaving old Thurston making his abject reverence for "value received."

Arthur had spoken jestingly, Joanna knew, and his words had given pain. But, as she went to the house, she passed by the mimosa-tree, and her thoughts and feelings underwent an instantaneous change. She had been so busy with her flounce and her demi-train that she had seen nothing of young Hendall for nearly a week, and she now remembered with keen self-reproach that she had lost the opportunity of expressing to him her appreciation of his graceful compliment in carving her name. Joanna had many little notions of her own on the subject of propriety and good-breeding; and she had meant to say something very well-worded and proper on the first occasion that should offer; but it had all gone out of her head at the thought of his departure. How, she asked herself, impatiently—how was she to prosper in life if she was always so unready? (For Joanna, you see, was practical as well as romantic.) And what must he think of her? It was not for him to mention the name he had carved, she knew very well.

And then this foolish little Joanna stood still in the shadow, and dreamed a foolish dream; from which, however, she was soon rudely awakened by Miss Basil's shrill voice, calling wildly:

"Joanna! O Jo—an—na!"

Alas! how many a lovely vision has been dispelled by that clarion-cry! Joanna, with a frown and a sigh, came back to earth, and, loath to be found in the immediate neighborhood of the tree that bore her name, advanced hurriedly up the broad walk that led to the house.

But Miss Basil, whom she met half-way, saw at once whence she came, and was seized with quick alarm. Joanna had had no breakfast, she knew; and she feared that the case must be nearly past hope when a girl gave herself up to romance before appeasing the demands of hunger.

"Joanna!" she exclaimed, vehemently, "you are the despair of my life! Have you forgotten that you have had no breakfast? Do you expect to live on air?"

"No, certainly, 'Mela," answered Joanna, briskly. She had a good, healthy appetite, and just now she was very hungry. "I could not eat my dinner yesterday, I was so—excited by company, I suppose; and I feel half starved."

"Yes," answered Miss Basil, in a much

calmer tone; "I remember that you ate no dinner." Though no great eater herself, she was always sorry for hungry people, and anxious to feed them. Joanna's matter-of-fact admission of her famished condition quieted her apprehensions somewhat, and appealed to her sympathies strongly. "I've kept something hot for you, child; but you should have eaten it long ago. I don't approve of long fasts at this season."

Happily for her peace of mind, it did not occur to her that Joanna could have been bidding farewell to young Hendall at the gate; and her clouded visage cleared apace when she saw with what good appetite the breakfast was assailed. Surely, now that young Hendall was fairly out of the way—and Miss Basil devoutly prayed that he might remain away forever—she need not despair utterly of Joanna. Nevertheless, she felt that she must now make it her study to counteract the pernicious influence of the ill-judged honor Mrs. Basil had conferred upon the child, in having her at the dining.

"Joanna," said she, mildly, "I do not wish to hurry you; rapid eating is ruinous to the digestion: take time, and eat leisurely, but when you have finished, there are the apples to be peeled and cut for drying; and, really, I need help." No fruit was allowed to rot on the ground at Basilwood; day by day, every windfallen apple, or so much of it as was available, was dried for market.

"Very well, 'Mela,'" said Joanna, cheerfully; "I'll help you all that I can." Though often idle, she was not lazy; and the burden of life does not seem so weary, after one has eaten a hearty breakfast with good appetite. "Just have every thing ready, 'Mela. I've finished my breakfast."

"Here is the basket of apples, child; and here is the basket for the cores and the peelings; and here are the knife and the tray," answered Miss Basil, categorically. "Tie on this apron, to save your dress; and be very careful to cut the peelings as thin as possible; let there be no waste, Joanna."

"Aren't you going to help—to assist, I mean?" asked Joanna, mindful still of expressing herself with elegant propriety. "Because I should like to talk to you." Joanna was hoping to hear the untold story of Miss Basil's girlhood: no wonder she was so willing to work at the apples.

"Why, no—not exactly; that is—I be-

lieve I must superintend Myra just now," stammered Miss Basil, uneasily.

"Pamela!" said Joanna, tragically, rising and stretching out her arms, "there is a great wall growing up between us—and you are building it."

Miss Basil turned white, and then red. At last, "You are talking nonsense!" said she, angrily; and walked out of the room.

But Joanna saw that Miss Basil understood her; she saw, too, that Miss Basil could not be at ease in her presence; why else should she make Myra an excuse, Myra who was so thoroughly trustworthy? And Joanna, embittered by suspicion and distrust, began to exercise a ruthless espionage over the uneasy woman, who, before that day was over, became keenly alive to the fact that she was watched. For Miss Basil was by no means in so great need of assistance as she would have had Joanna believe. The absence, so far, of visitors had rendered the summer a far easier one than had been known at Basilwood for several years past, and Miss Basil had, just now, rather more leisure than was good for her, under the circumstances. If she had been really so very busy, she might have escaped the uncomfortable consciousness of Joanna's great eyes that followed her everywhere. Even when she went up-stairs, late in the afternoon, to dress, Joanna was at her side, restless, miserable, indignant, and tyrannical.

"There!" she cried, reproachfully, when the black silk was taken down from its peg in the closet, "now I know *that* Mr. Redmond is coming again! A clean calico is good enough for most days."

"Joanna," said Miss Basil, irritably, "you are speaking disrespectfully. How often must I remind you that Basil Redmond is a friend, a good friend of yours, and a relation besides?"

"Then, if that is so," said Joanna, with prompt malice, and rising, "why may I not dress to receive him?"

"No, Joanna, no," said Miss Basil, hurriedly, "you are but a child, and he comes to see me on business. You should not be forward."

"He is no friend of mine! I'll not have him for a friend!" cried Joanna, bitterly. "He comes to talk secrets with you, secrets that shut *me* out from your heart."

"Nonsense!" was all that Miss Basil

could say; but she said it with her flushed face bent over the open bureau-drawer, in which her hands were wildly tossing about the orderly array of collars, and cuffs, and handkerchiefs, and Joanna knew that it was not "nonsense."

Poor woman! She thought this child, that she had so striven to train up in the way she should go, utterly unreasonable; but she had never attempted to reason with Joanna, she did not know how. When Joanna became "unreasonable," she could only use authority; so, when she had recovered somewhat from her confusion, she said, sharply:

"Joanna, this idle way of hanging about annoys me so that I cannot find what I want. Haven't you some knitting, or some crochet, that you can fill up the day with?"

"May I take it into the garden?" asked Joanna, resignedly.

"Yes, surely, child," Miss Basil replied; for now, that Arthur Hendall was gone, why should she not have the freedom of the garden? Any thing to keep her out of the way just now.

But Joanna was going into the garden with the express purpose of waylaying Basil Redmond, whom she felt sure of meeting alone, as, by the time he took his departure, Pamela, she knew, would be under the necessity of skimming the cream.

She hid herself, therefore, within the friendly shadow of a ragged, overgrown *eucalyptus*, and waited; but she waited long. Basil Redmond was much later than she had thought he would be, and when at last he came he was not alone. Joanna, within the shadow, distinctly heard Mrs. Basil's subdued but clear tones in earnest discussion.

"... But I found her here, as you know, when I married, and I asked the judge no questions," Mrs. Basil was saying.

They had evidently arrested their steps at this point, and were standing now quite near Joanna's retreat.

"I am utterly free from idle curiosity," continued Mrs. Basil. "I have not the faintest desire to pry into her affairs; but you must agree with me that it is extremely embarrassing to find that she has become a subject of gossip. One really does not know what to say when one is assailed with the statement that a quiet, inoffensive, retired woman like Miss Basil is the centre of some great mystery. Pamela is so—so reticent that I hesitate to say any thing to her."

"Thank you; you are very considerate," said Redmond, quickly.

"But, indeed, this sort of gossip should be stopped; and I appeal to you, Mr. Redmond, to say how it can best be done."

"The best way to stop it, I should think," replied he, after a pause, "would be simply not to heed it."

"But consider: this story, or rather this hint of a story, for there is nothing tangible about it, so far as I can learn, comes through Lydia Crane, a sister of Lebrun the milliner, who has a cousin living out West, in the very neighborhood from which Miss Basil came—"

"It is many years ago," interrupted Redmond, briefly.

"And this cousin of Lebrun's," continued Mrs. Basil, "writes to her relatives here, declaring that there is some mighty mystery about Miss Basil; and that only very recently some one has been out there instituting very strict inquiries about her. One can hardly refuse to listen to statements like this, though I blush to relate such tattle; yet it strikes me that you are the proper person to refute it."

A pause followed, during which Joanna, whose conscience did not reproach her in the least for listening, feared that the loud beating of her heart must betray her.

At last Redmond spoke:

"All this seems to me too vague to be worth refuting; but it is due to you, perhaps, to say that—Miss Basil *has* a story—"

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Basil, sharply.

"A sad and painful story. It was known to the judge, who counseled silence; and silence certainly seemed best under then-existing circumstances. The time, however, is coming, I think, when silence shall no longer be advisable; but, until this time does come, I cannot feel at liberty to reveal what I know of her story; and, meanwhile, I rely upon your known discretion and—sympathy."

In grappling with the world at so early an age, Basil Redmond had certainly learned some adroitness.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Basil. "But, I must express a hope, Mr. Redmond, that this—mystery of Miss Basil's, into which, it is needless to say, I will no further inquire, will reflect no discredit upon the Basil family. I bear the name myself."

"It will reflect no discredit upon the Basil family," Redmond replied, rather coldly.

"It is getting late," said Mrs. Basil. Then, with a long, shivering sigh: "I will no longer detain you. Good-night."

"Good-night," responded Redmond, standing for a moment wrapped in thought where Mrs. Basil had left him. Only for a moment, however; hardly had she disappeared when Joanna sprang out of her retreat and startled his thoughts away.

"I've heard what you said," panted she. "I listened on purpose; right or wrong, I must know. I waited here to ask you. Pamela is all I have in the world; why must you come between us with your secrets and your mysteries?"

Poor little Joanna! she had been all day conning a well-worded, deliberate, effective speech; and this was all that she could say, half choking with the utterance, as it was.

"Joanna!" exclaimed Redmond. "Poor child!" And Joanna, who had persuaded herself that she hated him, burst into tears at his sympathizing tones. "Joanna! Joanna!" he said, distressed, "be quiet, try to be quiet, and I will make you understand it." Joanna, then, by a great effort, having subdued her sobs, he continued, gravely: "If you have heard what I said to Mrs. Basil, there is no need for me to repeat it; for I can tell you no more than I told her. But hear me one moment, little Joanna—can you not see that your 'Mela, as you call her, has a right to withhold her confidence from you? If you love her, you will trust her without exacting confidence; you will bear in mind what you have heard me say, that her story is a sad and painful one, and you will shrink from all allusion to it for very pity."

Joanna, as she heard him, began to feel miserably guilty.

"I see I have been wrong," she said, meekly. "I would like to be a comfort and consolation to 'Mela, for often enough I've been a pure aggravation."

"You can be a comfort and consolation to her without a doubt," said Redmond, smiling to himself at her artlessness. "Joanna, you and I should never forget that she has been to each of us a mother indeed. What should we be without her? For myself, I tremble to think."

He paused, and was silent a long time.

"I don't understand you," said Joanna, timidly. She was awed by his manner.

"You cannot get over the impression that

I am a stranger," said he, with a kindly smile. "Sit here on this bench, and let me tell you about the time when you were my playmate in this very garden; let me, if possible, recall myself to your remembrance."

"And yet," said Joanna, yielding a reluctant consent, "you don't live here; you've been away for years, and when you come back you stay over in the town as if you were a stranger, really."

His face darkened.

"I can never make Basilwood my home," said he; "but I do not wish to talk about that, Joanna; I would rather make you remember me, if I can;" and then he began to tell her about his boyhood at his Basilwood.

Miss Basil, in her dry, brief fashion, had recounted it all before; but there was so wide a difference between her manner and his, that the story had all the charm of novelty, and, though it was not possible to recall more than a very faint image of that time to her remembrance, her prejudice against him, as a stranger, began slowly to fade away.

Her interest deepened when he came to speak of his life "out in the world." It had been a struggle full of adventure.

"I must have succumbed to temptation and been lost forever," said he, with feeling, as if to sum up all that remained to be said about his debt to Miss Basil, "but for that constant soul. She never lost sight of me, she never lost faith in me. I was the hope of her life, she said, and she made it impossible that I should disappoint her."

"H'm!" said Joanna; "and I am the despair of her life; she tells me so from day to day."

"Oh, no," Basil Redmond answered; "you must not be that. Did you not say just now that you would be her comfort and consolation?"

Then he bade her "Good-night," and was gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF CARVING A NAME.

"A COMFORT and a consolation to 'Mela:" this Joanna had firmly resolved to be. But, unfortunately for the success of this praiseworthy intention, favorable conditions were wanting. Miss Basil had grown suspicious, and would not now be followed about as of

old. When Joanna, bent upon being a comfort and a consolation, pleaded hard for the privilege of sitting with her at work, of fanning her, of threading her needles, the distrustful woman complained bitterly that the child grew more troublesome every day.

So Joanna fell back upon her own resources again. A week went by, and the long, uneventful summer days came and passed, one day like another, just as she had foreseen when she bade young Hendall good-by at the gate. She could not help sighing a little for his return, and she sighed more than a little, when, one morning she happened to overhear his aunt say, in reply to some question Miss Basil had asked about his room, that he would not return for a month. Miss Basil, finding her a few moments afterward sitting listlessly by the hall-window up-stairs, told her, sharply, to go take some exercise. She always spoke sharply now to Joanna, by way of forestalling inopportune remarks.

"May I go with you, 'Mela'?" asked she, plaintively, seeing Miss Basil tie on her hat.

"No, child, no," answered Miss Basil, quickly. "I'm only going to the Griswolds. They're down, as usual, with chills, and you can do no good. Go run about the garden."

But, in the days of June, one begins to tire a little of a garden. Joanna walked languidly to her favorite alcove, and there sat down, opposite the mimosa-tree. It comforted her a little to sit and gaze at her name, carved in the bark. It was one of her silly fancies that the tree always had a message for her; and it said now:

"Be of good cheer, Joanna; Pamela is cross and secret; the days are dull and long; but time, that goes so slowly now, will go swiftly enough one day; everybody is not cross, everybody is not secret!"

Now Mrs. Basil, in compliance with Dr. Garnet's advice, had adopted the habit of walking in the garden for the good of her health; and passing by the alcove late this morning, she was moved by some gracious impulse to stop and speak to the forlorn little dreamer sitting there. Instead of passing Joanna by with a nod and a smile, as was her ordinary habit, she asked pleasantly, what charm so retired a spot could have for a young girl?

But Joanna, unaccustomed to such notice from the grandmamma, was not ready with a

reply; and while she hesitated shyly, Mrs. Basil's wandering eyes were arrested by the name on the mimosa-tree.

"Ah! I comprehend perfectly," said she, nodding her head with an effort at playfulness. "At your age, Joanna, it is natural that such trifles should give pleasure; but, indeed, I should never have believed Mr. Basil Redmond capable of so much romance. It certainly is a very pretty piece of romance to carve your name on the tree his own hands planted when a boy. Trust me, I shall keep his secret." And Mrs. Basil, well pleased with a discovery that seemed to flatter her hopes, was about to pass on, when Joanna, whose sturdy truthfulness would not permit her to keep silence, exclaimed, with a sudden rush of telltale color:

"But it was Mr. Hendall!"

Mrs. Basil uttered an involuntary cry, as though she had received a blow; but she was both too well-bred and too politic to express her vexation in words. With one keen, quick glance at Joanna, hanging her head in confusion, she deliberately adjusted the glasses upon her near-sighted eyes, and calmly scrutinized the now obnoxious carving for a few seconds, during which she was deciding upon the course to be pursued. This done, she remarked, quietly, but not without a certain irrepressible scorn, as she removed her glasses:

"It is neatly done; my nephew has quite a pretty talent for such *fancy-work*," and walked away with her head exalted.

Joanna, utterly incapable though she was of defining the confusion that overwhelmed, understood Mrs. Basil intuitively. Not all the wisdom that poor Miss Basil had been preaching for years could enable her to perceive her own folly in dreaming over the idle work of young Hendall's knife; but her feminine instinct revealed to her, on the instant, the grandmamma's antagonism.

"Everybody is against me!" she cried, passionately, when Mrs. Basil had passed out of sight; "and I am not—I am *not* to blame!"

But Mrs. Basil, who prided herself upon being a thoroughly reasonable woman, perceived clearly enough that Joanna was not to blame. It was no part of her policy to treat the child with harshness. She began now to manifest a great solicitude about the health and well-being of her husband's

granddaughter; but none the less was she determined to put a peremptory end to her nephew's incipient folly; and to do it so that her motives should not be suspected.

Not that Mrs. Basil was ashamed of her motives, however. She persuaded herself, now as heretofore, that she was influenced at least as much by a consideration for Joanna's welfare as by solicitude for Arthur's future; and she began to reproach herself for having neglected to answer Miss Hawkesby's letter. She had found Basil Redmond so utterly impracticable that she saw plainly she must give up any hope of counteracting Arthur's folly through his agency; but something might be done by working upon old Miss Hawkesby: if by any means Joanna could be quietly and properly sent out of the way during Arthur's absence! Mrs. Basil resolved to try what could be done to bring this about. Accordingly, she called on Mrs. Stargold, a step that could not excite suspicion, for she went there every day or two; and she contrived very adroitly to turn the conversation upon Miss Hawkesby, without mentioning her name. She wished to arrive at the old lady's address without asking for it; and here Mrs. Ruffner came to her aid—Mrs. Ruffner that always told every thing she knew. From her Mrs. Basil learned that Miss Hawkesby had gone to pass the summer in a little place called Rockville, a very quiet little town, with no attraction but its climate. "Just the place for her to take Joanna to," thought Mrs. Basil, complacently; and when she went home she wrote old Miss Hawkesby a really touching letter about her little grandniece, giving the old lady to understand that the child's health would be benefited by a change.

When old Miss Hawkesby received this letter, she was suffering from a fit of indigestion, brought on by eating biscuits made of soda and lard, slightly flavored with flour. "Not that I like the things," she said, to a fellow-boarder, and fellow-sufferer, "but they give you no other bread. If I were a millionaire, which I am not, more's the pity for the country, I'd found an institution of cookery. Hear our landlady's daughter now tinkling breathless jigs on a tuneless piano! Mightn't she learn the fair proportions of a Southern biscuit at a far less cost and a far greater profit? How can we esteem ourselves a respectable people, a civilized peo-

ple, when we sit down to such a conglomeration of grease and alkali and call it—food? For my part, I think it impious to say grace over such a meal; it is tempting Providence, to eat it."

Miss Hawkesby, by way of economy, sometimes betook herself to little obscure places, that, boasting of good water and fine air, allured the unwary by cheap board, and betrayed them by bad fare. "I like to know what places to avoid in my course through life," Miss Hawkesby would say, and be at a retreat. Now, Rockville was one of those places she never wished to see again; and it was just in this mood that Mrs. Basil's letter found her. "The little Joanna again," she said, as she read. "She needs a change, does she? Ho! ho! Why, so do I! No, no; I'll not bring my little grandniece to *this* place. When I wish to poison my nearest relations, I'll choose a more refined instrument than a Rockville biscuit. If I stay here much longer, Anita will grow to look like a bag. One can't live on air alone, and as to climate, any place is endurable until September, provided one can get something to eat; so I'll pick Miss Anita up, and go to Middleborough for a little while. I don't wish to neglect my other niece utterly; and I'd like to see for myself whether it is she or Mrs. Basil that needs a change."

So Miss Hawkesby sent off a letter forthwith to Mrs. Basil, and the next day but one she packed her trunks, and Rockville knew her no more.

Mrs. Basil was more surprised than pleased at this proceeding. She had not desired a visit from Miss Hawkesby, who, of course, would be accompanied by Anita; and, if there was danger in Joanna, would there not be double danger in that prettier and more accomplished sister? But, fortunately, Arthur was absent; Miss Hawkesby might go, taking Joanna with her, before he returned, if only a little diplomacy could be brought to bear effectively upon her: and since, in any event, the visit was not to be avoided, Mrs. Basil wisely determined to make the best of it.

Of course the expected arrival must be announced without delay to Miss Basil, for it would be necessary to engage another servant; Miss Hawkesby would naturally expect to be waited upon like a lady. But Mrs. Basil did not think it necessary to impart to Miss Basil the particulars of her correspond-

ence with Joanna's aunt; she wished the visit, since it was inevitable, should bear the appearance of a voluntary compliment to the child. Miss Basil, however, was more inclined to look upon it as foreboding an unjustifiable interference with her own rights over Joanna, and she took on a most doleful spirit.

Not so the little Joanna: she was full of a restless delight at the prospect. She could remember her sister but indistinctly, and her old aunt not at all. They seemed to her almost like myths, so little part had they taken in her life; and the prospect of meeting them, to which she had always unconsciously looked forward as one of the vague possibilities of the future, was now like the realization of one of her glorious dreams.

"You do well to make the best of it, child," said Miss Basil, shaking her head dolefully; "but I should fail in my duty if I did not warn you that life is full of disappointments. What do you know of Anita and old Miss Hawkesby?"

"That's Pamela's doleful way," thought Joanna, impatiently. "She sees a canker in every bud. I shall just have to keep my joy to myself."

But this was more than Joanna could do when any chance of sympathy offered.

The day before her aunt and sister were expected, greatly to her surprise and gratification, Arthur Hendall unexpectedly returned. The great Westport and Brookville Road, undertaken with so large promise of success, was in trouble; lack of funds had brought the work to a sudden stand-still, and this young civil-engineer was under the necessity of taking his leisure at Basilwood. His aunt welcomed him with a sigh. Being a woman, she was privileged to indulge inconsistent regrets. "Ah! if he were planting, he would not thus be subject to the caprice of Fortune," she sadly thought, forgetful of the caterpillar and the boll-worm that had so often blighted her prospects. The truth was, however, that she felt she could have managed old Miss Hawkesby much better in his absence. But the little Joanna, burdened with no plots and counterplots, was unaffectedly glad to see him. He came by the early morning train, and, as she was going into town to make some necessary purchases, she met him walking along the shady road.

"O Mr. Hendall!" she cried, stretching

out her hands. "I thought you were to be away a whole month longer, and here you are!"

"And are you glad to see me, Joanna?" said Arthur, taking her two hands in his. "You have not forgotten me?"

"I haven't so many to remember that I should forget you," said Joanna. "And, indeed, I am glad to see you, for something memorable is about to happen."

"Ah!" said Arthur, pretending to look fierce. "Has it any thing to do with my rival and enemy?"

Joanna started.

"I mean Mr. Redmond."

"Why should you talk in that way to me?" said Joanna, coloring. "I am not—concerned about him. I want to tell you that my sister is coming to see me, and my aunt, she is coming too."

"Your sister?" repeated Arthur, in surprise. "I—I did not know that you had a sister."

"My—half-sister," explained truthful Joanna, with some unwillingness. "Before our father died we were together; but since we were little children we have not met. She has lived with our great-aunt, and *has seen the world*."

"But," said Arthur, bluntly, "why has she never been to see you before?"

"Oh," replied Joanna, hastily, and coloring with vexation, "visits, you know, are not always—*convenient* between relations. Why, you yourself haven't visited the grandmamma until just now?"

"That is true," said Arthur, coloring in his turn, for he had not thought of making his aunt a visit until it happened to be the most convenient thing he could do.

"Now," continued Joanna, "my aunt, Miss Hawkesby—"

"Hawkesby? Then your sister is Anita—Miss Anita Hawkesby?" exclaimed Arthur, with a start. "I never would have thought it. But then—how should I, when your name is Basil?"

"My name is Hawkesby," said Joanna. "Not know my name?"

"Joanna, forgive me!" cried Arthur, impulsively seizing her hands. "Was it not enough for me to know that you are Joanna, and that you let me call you so?"

The color rose swiftly in Joanna's face, called up less by the words, indeed, than by

the tone in which they were uttered. She forgave him on the instant, in one eloquent glance, his ignorance of her name. Then, anxious to escape the half-painful, half-pleasing embarrassment she felt, she asked :

"And you know Anita, my sister, then?"

"Undoubtedly, and old Miss Hawkesby, too," replied Arthur, instantly assuming a calmer manner. He began to wish that he had not allowed himself so much *empressment* in his interviews with Joanna. It was a way he had of making himself agreeable, and girls in society understood it; but Joanna was not a girl in society.

"Tell me about her," entreated Joanna.

"About old Miss Hawkesby?" asked Arthur, with a forced laugh.

"Old Miss Hawkesby, my aunt," said Joanna, leniently, "is elderly, and, I suppose, has ways of her own—"

"Unquestionably," interpolated Arthur.

"But Anita—I wish you would tell me about Anita. Tell me the most interesting thing you know about her."

"The most interesting thing I know about her, I think, concerns a lover."

"How do you know she has a lover?" asked Joanna, with a quick look.

"Haven't all girls lovers?"

"I don't know; yes, I suppose so. Is he tender and true?"

"Good Heavens, Joanna!" cried Arthur, laughing. "What should you know about the characteristics of lovers?"

"Nothing," Joanna answered, coloring. "I—but I have *my ideas*, all the same. So, go on, please—that is, if you think Anita would not mind?" she added, hesitatingly, restrained by an innate sense of delicacy.

"I don't think she would mind," said Arthur, with a short laugh. "I never knew a girl yet that had the least objection to publishing her conquests—or, rather, to having them published by others."

"Well?" said Joanna, impatiently.

"As to her having one lover, it is no secret that she has two."

"Oh, I dare say, and more besides," answered Joanna. "It was to be expected, Anita is so very lovely. But I'll not stay to hear about any of them. You take up *all* my time."

Arthur, leaning against a tree in careless ease, and fanning himself with his hat, thought that he had never seen any girl look

so pretty as Joanna did just then. Little did he care for wasting the morning; he was content to enjoy life while he could. He intended that Joanna should stay and amuse him while she looked so spirited and so pretty. He was not making love to her, and where was the harm?

"Stay, Joanna!" he cried, "and I'll tell you about both of them: there is the younger one to begin with, a boy, old Miss Hawkesby calls him; he is no favorite of hers; she declares that he is '*no match at all*;' that's Miss Hawkesby's formula for *anathema mar-an-atha*."

"I dare say Miss Hawkesby's judgment is—correct; she knows the world," remarked Joanna, briefly.

"Don't *you* grow worldly, Joanna, I beg!" said Arthur, with a short, uneasy laugh. "I don't wish you to uphold that other lover, who is no favorite of mine."

"What does my aunt, Miss Hawkesby, think of *him*?"

"Your aunt, Miss Hawkesby, thinks very well of him. He is past his youth, and his hair is scant; but he is said to have great expectations, and he suits old Miss Hawkesby."

"I dare say my aunt knows best," said Joanna, sedately; "I hope *my* sister will never throw herself away upon any trifling young man. What is his name? I mean that other one?"

"Ah, there you must excuse me," replied Arthur, with an amused smile. "To name names, in such a case, would be treason."

"It is getting late, and you have had no breakfast," said Joanna, abruptly. If she had been a little older, and a little more experienced, she would have known that no hungry man would voluntarily delay his breakfast to talk about any girl's lovers.

CHAPTER XX.

ANITA, BELLE D'INDOLENCE.

ALL that day Joanna labored under a sense of uneasiness that she knew well enough was to be referred to the revelations Arthur had made; yet, like any other weak mortal, she shrank from self-knowledge, and refused to understand why her prophetic soul was alarmed by the mention of the young

man whom her aunt, Miss Hawkesby, did not like; but—was it not an idle young man that had cut her name on the mimosa-tree?

A good night's rest, however, restored the equilibrium of her spirits, and, with the buoyancy natural to her age, Joanna, the next morning, made herself ready to welcome Miss Hawkesby and Anita.

Mrs. Basil also had risen betimes, certainly a very great effort for her, and was attired with some care, in order to do honor to her expected guests; but Arthur and Miss Basil were invisible. Arthur was indulging in the latest possible nap; and Miss Basil, though rather defiant of Miss Hawkesby, was anxious the breakfast should be a success.

The little Joanna was anxious about nothing but her toilet. The grandmamma herself had hinted a wish that her husband's granddaughter should make a good impression, and Joanna certainly spared no pains to look well. The cars were late that morning, and there was ample time to study the effect of her various little adornments. Did her skirts puff out properly at the back? Was her hair arranged in good style? Should she wear a sash or an apron? Alas! there was no one to decide this last momentous question; and Joanna tried the effect of each repeatedly, dividing the time of waiting between the mirror and the piazza-steps, and was at last surprised in both sash and apron when the carriage appeared at the gate; for Joanna was not so absorbed in the question of dress but that she could forget it utterly in the joy of welcoming the nearest relation she had in the world. Oblivious, therefore, of the sash that was in the way of the apron, and of the apron that half obscured the glories of the sash, she rushed forward the moment the carriage stopped, to clasp in her eager embrace a figure so enveloped in duster and veils that it was difficult to divine what manner of creature she was.

"Oh, spare me!" exclaimed a soft voice. "My dearest, you are as bad as a railroad accident! Don't demolish me altogether, I beg!" And then the speaker kissed Joanna twice through her veil, and, turning to Mrs. Basil, said, as she shook hands: "I'll not venture to show my face *yet*; I'm not fit to be seen, I know!"

Mrs. Basil smiled, and said, rather absently, that she should do as she pleased. Miss Hawkesby was to her a much more im-

portant personage than Anita, and her entire attention was taken up in waiting upon that lady's deliberate descent from the carriage.

"Is the step safe? I say, Anita, is the step safe?" asked Miss Hawkesby, hoarsely. "I've no notion of breaking my bones, I do assure you."

Not a word, not a thought, not a glance, for any one had she, until she was safe upon the ground.

"My dear Miss Hawkesby," said Mrs. Basil, with unction, and extending both hands, "I am charmed to welcome you to Basilwood. I trust that you feel no ill effects from your journey?"

"Thank you," said Miss Hawkesby, with first a steady look at Mrs. Basil, and then a sweeping glance all around her, that failed, however, to take in the little Joanna. "So this is Basilwood? Bears evidence of *having been* a fine old place. However, that may be said of most places in the South now. We describe ourselves in the past tense, which is highly respectable at least. Oh! and this is Joanna, my niece?" she asked, with sudden recognition, as Joanna timidly advanced. "How do you do, child? You may give me a kiss. A regular Basil, you are; I always said so, though you were but a baby when your father brought you to see me. I hope to Heaven you are not sickly!"

"No, madam," Joanna answered, rather to Mrs. Basil's confusion; "I am always well."

"Oh! Pamela tells me," Mrs. Basil hastened to say, "that she has a very poor appetite."

"Well, well, we shall see about that," said Miss Hawkesby. "As for me, a long fast has given me an admirable appetite. I shall do justice to your breakfast, Mrs. Basil."

"Will you go to your room first?" asked Mrs. Basil. "Joanna shall show you the way."

So Joanna went with Miss Hawkesby into the room prepared for her, saw that she had every thing she needed, and then ushered Anita into her own little sanctum, which they were to occupy together, and which she had adorned with flowers, in honor of the occasion.

"What a funny little den!" cried Anita, running up to the muslin-draped toilet-table.

"And, oh, horror! what a distorting little glass! I'm a fright to behold!"

Joanna had not yet seen her sister's face, and, before Anita turned round from the contemplation of its distorted reflection, Miss Hawkesby called, hoarsely:

"Joanna! Joanna, child! I say, come here!" and Joanna hastened to obey.

"Are you good at waiting on people?" asked Miss Hawkesby, with a searching look that made Joanna shrink, and stammer that she did not know; she would do her best.

"We shall see," said Miss Hawkesby. "If you've any talent that way, it's more than your sister has. Help me off with my things. Thank you, you are quite handy. It's a pity you are such a regular Basil."

Poor Joanna did not know it, but to be "a regular Basil" was extremely reprehensible in Miss Hawkesby's estimation. She had never forgiven her nephew's second marriage.

"Just unpack my satchel, will you?" continued Miss Hawkesby. "That'll do; and now run down-stairs and bring me word how soon I may expect breakfast."

Away went Joanna, and presently returned with the welcome tidings that breakfast would be ready in about ten minutes.

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Hawkesby. "I'm glad to hear it, for I'm starving."

"May I go now?" asked Joanna, timidly.

She was very anxious to see Anita; but she stood in great awe of Miss Hawkesby.

"Oh, yes; you may go," answered Miss Hawkesby. "You'll find that Anita likes being waited on quite as much as I do."

Anita had bathed her face, and given a touch to her hair, and, divested now of her veils and wraps, she was a creature to challenge admiration. There was just sufficient likeness between the little Joanna and herself to make the difference between them the more marked. Each had the same dark, deep eyes, the same mobile mouth and dimpled chin, the same white, slightly-irregular teeth, the same willing grace; but there all likeness ended, for Anita was dazzlingly fair, with a delicate peach-blow color, and a profusion of pale, blond hair, "in most admired disorder."

Joanna, seeing her now for the first time unobscured by wraps and veils, stopped short in unaffected admiration.

"O Anita!" she exclaimed, "how lovely you are! You look just like a fashion-plate. I am so glad you are my sister."

Anita was accustomed to homage, and she never refused it, no matter how it was offered. She laughed—and a rippling laugh, like music, had she—clapped her hands softly, and said:

"A genuine compliment! But compliments are always more acceptable put in a more graceful form, remember. There's a hint, my novice, that may serve as a lesson in *savoir faire* for you."

"Oh, yes; thank you, Anita," said Joanna, with a palpitating heart. "I will remember; and you'll find me attentive and willing to improve. I've had no one to teach me the—the *convenances*, you know" (Joanna could use French, too), "and all that. 'Mela is very, very good; but she is what is called a—*recluse*, you see!"

"Who is 'Mela'?" asked Anita, with a lazy, rising inflection.

"She—why, you know, Miss Basil, Pamela, my cousin that takes care of me."

"Ah, I remember," replied Anita, with a show of interest. "A woman with a history, or a mystery."

Joanna turned pale, and shivered with a feeling that she was pursued by an apparition.

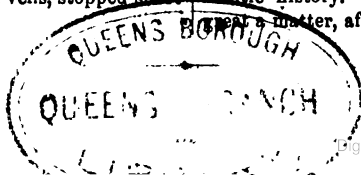
"Why, what is it, child?" asked Anita, half laughing.

"Indeed, I don't know; would you mind telling me, Anita?" said poor Joanna, drawing nearer. Though she had resolved not to annoy Miss Basil with further questions, she saw no reason why Anita should not tell her all she knew about this painful subject.

"I've a wretched memory for such things," said Anita, indifferently, and suppressing a yawn. "There was something about Miss Basil having a romantic history in a letter my aunt had from Mrs. Ruffner, and she had it, what there was of it, from Mrs. Carl Tomkins. Do you know Mrs. Carl Tomkins?" she asked, with reviving interest.

"Yes, oh yes," answered unsophisticated Joanna. "I dined with her the other day."

Her mind was sensibly relieved by her sister's placid indifference to Miss Basil's romantic history. It surely couldn't be so after all, she hoped.



"Oh, indeed, you dined with Mrs. Carl Tomkins?" said Anita, rousing herself with increased interest.

"She dined here, that is," explained Joanna, with rising color; "and by the grandmamma's desire I was present."

"Oh, that's different, you know," said Anita. "A pleasant woman, she is; so good at charade-parties, and that sort of thing."

"Is she? O Anita! do you suppose she will have a charade-party while you are here?" (eagerly).

"Possibly she may, if I ask her to. How *intense* you are, child! that's not good style. And what a regular little guy you have made of yourself with sash and apron both. What possessed you?"

"Indeed, I did not know that I had on both," answered Joanna, coloring furiously, and snatching at the apron so that the pins flew out hither and thither. "Of course, I knew better."

"Don't you be offended," said Anita, caressingly. "You know, Joanna, I take a sisterly pride in you. You are a dear child"—giving her cheek a little pat—"and I shan't ever let you make a guy of yourself. And now, can't you contrive to have my breakfast sent up to me? I really am incapable of making a toilet."

"But—but—" stammered Joanna, who dreaded to have her sister do any thing that would impress Miss Basil unfavorably, "no toilet—no *special* toilet is necessary, surely. There is only the grandmamma and her nephew Mr. Hendall—Mr. Arthur Hendall, whom you know already."

"Do I?" said Anita, falling back sleepily upon the lounge. "What kind of person is he?"

"Why, Anita, you know," said Joanna the simple, with a quick throb.

"I know *so many* people, child," said Anita, with an appealing sigh.

"Yes, certainly," Joanna assented leniently; "but then I should think that you would remember Mr. Arthur Hendall," and she sighed, unconsciously.

"Don't be a goose, my dear little sister I foresee that I must take you under my wing in a great many ways."

"O Anita!" said Joanna, with feeling; "I have missed you so many years!"

Thereupon a silence followed, which Anita was too much of an artist in her way to

interrupt. She liked to enjoy the effect of all she said and did. She meant to be very fond of Joanna, and she meant that Joanna should adore her; of course it would be very pleasant to be adored by her "dear little sister," and it would look so well!

And Joanna? She was quite ready to adore Anita, no doubt; and also to profit largely by the example and instructions of one who could reveal the delicate arts and mysteries pertaining to young ladyhood. It would be unjust to say that more selfishness mingled with Anita's sisterly sentiments than with Joanna's; for each was influenced by her own individuality.

But old Miss Hawkesby presently appeared at the door, and interrupted the silence that had been filled on Joanna's part at least, it is safe to say, with thoughts too big for utterance.

"Anita, what does this mean? Not going down to breakfast?" said the old lady, with a show of displeasure that took all the bravery out of Joanna at the first word.

But Anita was not so easily overawed.

"Dear aunt, I am *so* tired," said she, in a plaintive, coaxing way. She was as good at defying authority as Joanna; but her way of doing it was altogether different, and, as she herself would have said, "more becoming."

"Not more tired than I am, surely!" said old Miss Hawkesby, hoarsely. "However, have your own way, as you always do."

And with this she sailed magnificently down-stairs.

"Just like aunt!" cried Anita, with a laugh. "Don't look so scared, child; she's not half so formidable as she seems. Your rigid, strenuous-looking people never are. Nothing so easy as to demolish their out-works, if you only know how. Soft, yielding-looking little things like me are your true irresistibles. I'll engage, Joanna, that I'll make you do my bidding in spite of your conscience."

Joanna listened with the air of one receiving valuable instruction from a celebrated professor in human nature. If it had been any other than Anita uttering this last dictum, she might have doubted; but she was ready to surrender a blind belief to all Anita did and said.

"Now, Joanna, you see how exhausted I am; could I not have my breakfast here?"

"Yes, surely," Joanna answered prompt-

ly; she herself had eaten nothing—excitement had destroyed her appetite; but Anita was by no means incapable of enjoying the meal she brought up to her, in defiance of Miss Basil's wrath.

But Anita had hardly appeased her hunger when Miss Hawkesby came back, to all appearances more formidable than ever. "Anita, I thought you told me young Hendall was at Brookville?"

"Is he at Brookville, ma'am?" said Anita, opening her eyes, with innocent wonderment.

"He is in this very house!" said Miss Hawkesby, severely.

"It must be so, if you've seen him," said Anita, with an air of conviction; "but, really, ma'am, I couldn't believe it when Joanna told me."

Miss Hawkesby turned suddenly to Joanna. "And what do you know about him, you simpleton?" said she.

"N—nothing," stammered Joanna, quailing under her aunt's eyes. "He is the grand-mamma's nephew."

"I'm not going to bite, child," laughed old Miss Hawkesby, who rather enjoyed the terror she inspired. "I'm not half so dangerous to a little fool like you as he is. I hope he doesn't amuse himself at your expense."

"I—I don't know," stammered Joanna.

"I had a mind," said Miss Hawkesby, slowly, with a look of disapproval at Anita—"I had a mind to pick you up and leave forthwith; but I sha'n't do it—I shall stay."

"They do make such excellent biscuits here," said Anita, with artful simplicity.

"It is impossible, Anita," said Miss Hawkesby, with an air of great profundity—"it is impossible for you, you butterfly, to divine the depths of my mind."

"Dear aunt, I was thinking of your digestion!" Anita said this, leaning back on the lounge with her hands clasped behind her head, and her eyes half closed. "I wish we might take Joanna with us!"

"I'm not going away, I told you," said Miss Hawkesby in her deepest tones.

"Is it the biscuits you are staying for?" asked Anita, drowsily.

"Anita, you are impertinent!" said her aunt, and walked away. She thought she had discovered the source of Mrs. Basil's solicitude about Joanna—as if Joanna, her

niece, was not good enough for young Hendall! Miss Hawkesby thought she would stay and look into that little game, and pay Mrs. Basil in her own coin, and Anita should never suppose she, Olivia Hawkesby, couldn't cope with young Hendall. And so Miss Hawkesby composed herself for a nap.

"It is the biscuit, I tell you, Joanna," said Anita, when her aunt had gone. "Aunt is not a great eater—not a *gourmande*, you understand; but she has a tendency to dyspepsia. It is useful to know people's weaknesses, mental, moral, and physical. Now, Joanna, if you will take care that I am not disturbed, I will take a sleep, in order to be fresh for the evening."

"Dinner is at half-past five," said Joanna, with a feeling that, if Anita wished dinner brought up to her, it would be all right, except for 'Mela's wrath. On 'Mela's account she did hope Anita would go down to dinner. 'Mela had such a triumphant way of seeing a fault in Anita—hadn't she shown it about the breakfast?

"Call me in time to dress, then," said Anita, drowsily. "Oh!" rousing herself suddenly, "and meantime, child, as I dare say you have little enough to do, you may amuse yourself by unpacking for me!" Anita made it a principle never to do any thing for herself that she could charm any one else into doing, and thus she contrived to live a remarkably easy life.

CHAPTER XXI.

MISS HAWKESBY'S CREED.

ANITA could not have given her sister a more congenial task than the unpacking of her trunks. The little Joanna, who never before had had the privilege of handling so much finery, laid the various dainty articles in their proper places with many an admiring, but never one envious sigh. If not the rose herself, was it not at least an honor to live near the rose? No thought of arraying herself in Anita's adornments crossed her innocent, unselfish mind; but Joanna was human and feminine, and, the more she looked at all this brave attire, the stronger grew the hope that in Anita she might find a guide and assistant to all those little arts and mysteries of dress that so baffled her efforts. But this

hope Miss Basil, without knowing any thing about it, contrived to chill.

Miss Hawkesby, after the unpacking was over, had, with much good advice and wise admonition, excited Joanna's liveliest gratitude by the gift of a white French organdie and a leghorn hat. The organdie was yet in the piece; but the hat, the exquisite hat that made Joanna's very lungs expand, was trimmed with a Spanish lace scarf, fastened with an arrow of mother-of-pearl, and tucked up at the side with a pink rose; and Joanna, when she realized that it was her very own, felt that she had come into a noble inheritance.

When she had arranged her sister's possessions in order due, she went down to Miss Basil, to whom she declared enthusiastically that Anita was as lovely as an angel, and had dresses like the fashion-plates, and that her aunt had given her (Joanna) a beautiful dress and a perfect hat.

"I dare say they were things of Anita's," said Miss Basil, with a sniff.

"Indeed, no!" answered Joanna, indignantly; "they are *quite new*. I did not bring them down, 'Mela, because you never take an interest"—with a great sigh—"but this dress is French organdie, that has never even been unfolded, and all pure white."

"Do you mean to say that she didn't have it made up for you?" interrupted Miss Basil, resentfully.

"Now, 'Mela," remonstrated Joanna, ready to cry, "would you teach me ingratitude?"

"To be sure," said Miss Basil, dexterously evading this charge, "if you hadn't spent that five-dollar piece so recklessly and uselessly, Anne Amelia Griswold might make it—"

"Indeed she shouldn't touch it!" said Joanna, wincing a little at the unwelcome reference to her extravagance about the picture. "*Anne Amelia!* No style whatever!"

"She makes *my* dresses," said Miss Basil, in an injured tone. "However, you are never likely to need a white organdie, that *I* can see."

"We don't know what occasion may arise," said Joanna, with a grand air, thinking of Mrs. Carl Tompkins's aptitude for charade-parties. "And really, 'Mela, why should you wish to—to disparage my nearest relations?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Basil, with covert jealousy, "Miss Hawkesby has done so much

more for you than any one else ever has done!"

"'Mela, if you mean that I care for her more than for you, you do not know my heart!" cried Joanna, passionately. "Else you would surely trust me, 'Mela." Joanna had resolved that she would never again reproach Miss Basil with her carefully-guarded secret; and she did not know that she was breaking this resolve now; but, of all that Anita had said that morning, none made so deep an impression as that passing allusion to Miss Basil's being a woman with a history. "It haunts me everywhere," thought poor Joanna. "It is not I that seek it, but it seeks me."

Miss Basil understood her readily enough.

"Oh," said she, confused, "don't—don't get excited, Joanna; it is very bad for the digestion; and all our regular habits are to be broken into, now that *your* relations have come. We are all to breakfast and dine together at Mrs. Basil's own house, and Heaven alone knows what is to become of the time by such an arrangement. But it is all for *your* advantage, Mrs. Basil is pleased to say. I only hope it may not be for your disadvantage."

"O Pamela!" cried Joanna, joyfully, "how glad I am! Disadvantage? What disadvantage can there be in such an opportunity to—to—acquire the—*usages*, and all that? And you've always said the grand-mamma took no interest in me?" (reproachfully).

"There!" exclaimed Miss Basil, flushing. "Just as I expected, poor, blind little mortal that you are! carried away by worldly vanities. It's little use, my striving to imbue you with a proper sense of your responsibility in that station of life to which it has pleased God to call you. Mrs. Basil upsets all my hopes of you, Joanna."

"Yes, 'Mela—I'm very sorry," said Joanna, meekly; "but, you see, I can't help being glad."

And, as often happens, the attractions of the pomps and vanities lost nothing by this chilling opposition. Joanna did but turn a more ready ear to Anita's doctrines.

"Time to dress, is it, Joanna?" said Anita, with a yawn of pretended indifference, when Joanna called her. "Well, I suppose I must make the effort to get myself up in style, since I am to meet Mr. Arthur Hendall.

All men are my lawful game, and I must have my ammunition and artillery in proper trim. And this wisdom I can teach you, Joanna"—rising, with animation—"I am older than you, so take heed to this axiom: beauty is nothing, absolutely *nothing*, without dress. Men talk trash about beauty when unadorned, and all that; you need never believe their words. It is the language of the eye alone that can be relied on, and men's eyes always rest approvingly on the pretty woman that is well dressed. Be fashionable, be stylish, or die! There's wisdom for you." And she sank down in a graceful attitude upon the lounge, glancing furtively at her young sister to note the effect of her acting, for Anita must always have some one to practise upon.

Joanna, who could not suspect that this was mere acting for her astonishment, and who did not wish to be thought altogether ignorant of the world, assented with a gravity that made Anita laugh.

"You delicious little bit of simplicity!" cried she. "But, mind you, don't take all I say too literally, my Joanna. If I unbend in your presence, you are not to fancy that I am speaking my precise sentiments."

"No, surely, Anita," answered Joanna, rather bewildered, but also rather relieved. Worldly wisdom was very useful, no doubt; but she didn't wish to see Anita hardened by it.

"The truth is," cried Anita, springing up, and making ready for her toilet with an alacrity one seeing her but now stretched on the lounge would hardly have thought her capable of—"the truth is—get me my blue grenade, Joanna, please; and the mother-of-pearl pin for my hair—dress is a necessity of the age—my slippers, please—dress is power—my fan, and my white fichu—that's a dear child. Dress is individuality. Buffon, when he said, '*Le style, c'est l'homme*,' surely intended to say, '*Le style, c'est la femme*!' Dear me! what nonsense am I talking!" she exclaimed, checking herself, suddenly, at sight of Joanna, standing in rapt attention.

"Oh, pray go on, Anita; I mean—continue," said Joanna, earnestly; "it does not sound like nonsense to me, for I understand French, and all this is so very improving!"

"That may be, child, but I've no time for philosophy now; I'm in a crisis," said Anita, as she began to fasten up her redundant locks in a way that baffled Joanna's comprehension.

"I don't see how in the world you manage

that," said she, after a silent study of the complicated operation.

"Hand your head over here," said Anita, good-naturedly, "and, though I can't promise to do as much for it as I've done for mine, I'll give it a touch-and-go style you'll be sure to like. Another time, my little one, you shall have regular instructions, and then you can do my hair for me. I dearly love to have my hair dressed."

"O Anita," said Joanna, joyfully submitting her head to her sister's manipulations, "only teach me how, and I'll gladly dress your beautiful hair every day."

"There, you goose!" said Anita, "admire yourself, and then move out of my way. I must study effects a little. I'm never selfish when I'm thoroughly satisfied with myself. When I'm perfected in loveliness I'll give you a few transforming touches."

"O Anita, how have I done without you so long?" Joanna said, with an ardent sigh. "How can I do enough for you?"

"You've done very well without me," said Anita; "you're a nice little thing, you know how to admire, but you don't know what to do with yourself, that's evident. Away with this pink bow, it's atrocious! And this ruff—it's out of style—you shall wear one of mine. Now remember: you are under my tutelage. You must respect my opinions and obey my directions."

"Yes—oh, yes!" sighed Joanna.

"Listen now, and answer truly. Has Mr. Hendall pretended to admire you?"

"How could that be, Anita," said Joanna, with a quick flush, "when he had already seen you?"

"Well, you *are* a clever child," said Anita; "I have great hopes of you. And now we'll go down; but go quietly, my child—never allow yourself to be hurried. Walk behind me, Joanna, and then you will learn to walk well."

There was so exquisite a *naïveté* in Anita's belief in her own perfections that it could hardly be called vanity, and Joanna was too thoroughly imbued with the same belief to see any thing amusing in it, not being gifted by Nature with any sense of the ludicrous. As she walked behind that slight, graceful figure, utterly unconscious that she herself walked with the very same movements, she felt ready to immolate herself, in any way, for Anita's sake.

When they came into the sitting-room, where Mrs. Basil, Miss Hawkesby, and Miss Basil, were assembled, Anita immediately ran up and threw her arms around Miss Basil, saying, in her soft, insinuating voice:

"I am so glad to see you again, after all these years of separation. But I have never forgotten you. I was a wretch of a child, and called you Miss Pam—what am I to call you now?" And then Anita, not at all abashed by Miss Basil's stiffness, kissed her on both cheeks.

"I am called Miss Basil," was all the recognition she received; and Joanna was provoked to see that the kisses were submitted to with almost an air of offense.

Anita, however, not at all affected by this chilling reception, sank smilingly, in a graceful pose, upon a sofa commanding the door; whereupon Mrs. Basil, as if with an instinctive perception of her purpose in sitting there, turned to Miss Hawkesby, saying:

"My nephew desires me to make his excuses to yourself and Miss Anita. Mr. Ruffner came an hour ago with a message from Mrs. Stargold, insisting upon his dining with her. You know Mrs. Stargold, and how difficult it is to refuse her."

Anita bowed as composedly as though she had not donned the blue grenadine all in vain. Miss Hawkesby also bowed, smelling at her vinaigrette with a preoccupied air.

"I was quite taken by surprise," then said Mrs. Basil, turning to Anita, "hearing that you and my nephew are acquainted."

"Oh, yes," Anita answered with a winning smile, "I count him as one of my friends, you know."

"Um!" said old Miss Hawkesby, "I think if Mrs. Basil knew the string of gentlemen you honor with that title, she would hardly enjoy the compliment."

"It is better to have friends than enemies," said Anita, sweetly. "And I'm sure Mr. Arthur Hendall is nice, aunt," she added, shyly, "for Mrs. Stargold says so."

"Yes," said old Miss Hawkesby, "your nephew is a great favorite with Mrs. Stargold, eh?"

"Oh, I don't know," Mrs. Basil answered, with prudent reserve, but with deep, secret satisfaction—a satisfaction, however, not altogether unalloyed; for, between Miss Hawkesby's inscrutable face, and Anita's bewitching ways, she was more uneasy about

Arthur than she had ever been on Joanna's account. But people in society don't show this kind of uneasiness if they can help it, and so she smiled most graciously on Anita and Miss Hawkesby all through dinner.

As for Miss Hawkesby, she was in her element; she had discovered the secret of Mrs. Basil's solicitude about Joanna, and she had an opportunity to play Anita off against her. This she could do without risk, for young Hendall was an altogether different man in her estimation, now that Mrs. Stargold had taken him up. Those who did not know Miss Hawkesby well, invariably fell into the mistake of judging her to be an extremely transparent person; she *seemed* to speak of herself and her affairs with a perfect unreserve; but the old lady prided herself upon masking her secret views under the most daring frankness.

"Well, now," said she, "it is an easy matter for Mrs. Stargold to do something handsome for her young relations; look at her wealth! With me it is different. Anita knows how I must contrive and manage in order to keep up a proper appearance of style."

"Oh, dear, yes," murmured Anita; "if it wasn't for my knack at millinery and such work, aunt, what *should* we do?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Hawkesby. "That girl has a talent that is a fortune to her. A little bit of blond, a trifle of ribbon, a twist and a turn, and there, ma'am, you have the fichu she wears at this moment. I've known her to manufacture a love of a necktie with a piece of black lace and a strip of pink tissue-paper. Think of that!"

"O aunt!" said Anita, "I protest; you ought not to expose the secrets of my toilet."

"There are no gentlemen present, my dear," said Miss Hawkesby. "I never confess petty economies to gentlemen; they can't *respect* them. But with women it is different. I tell Anita"—turning to Mrs. Basil—"that she ought to marry a poor man—but mind you, Miss Anita, if you do, I'll never speak to you again."

Anita laughed.

"We hear of few *judicious* marriages now," said Mrs. Basil, feeling that she ought to say something.

"Few indeed!" assented Miss Hawkesby, with energy. "A sad state of things in our South at the present day! Our girls rush

into matrimony without considering for a moment the all-important question whether a man is *substantial*, and they call it love! One hears of nothing in these degenerate days but petty economies that narrow the soul."

"Why, aunt, you preach economy incessantly," said Anita.

"Because I must, child," retorted Miss Hawkesby. "You know very well that I am not rich. If it wasn't for your talent I spoke of just now, I don't know where your fichus, and ruffs, and things, would come from.—I hope Joanna has such a talent?" she asked, abruptly, turning to Miss Basil.

"No, I think not," said Miss Basil, gravely. "I've never encouraged any thing of the kind; Joanna must conform to her condition in life."

"Then permit me to tell you that you have neglected your duty," said Miss Hawkesby. "Joanna is only seventeen: how do you know what her condition in life is to be?"

Miss Basil colored; it wasn't pleasant to be told that she had neglected her duty; if she were given time to deliver a homily, she could prove the contrary to her own satisfaction, at least; but her voluminous ideas on the subject of duty could not shape themselves in terse and ready repartee; and, before she found words to reply, Miss Hawkesby resumed:

"I've no doubt, my dear madam, that you acted with the best intentions; but you've made a mistake. Of course, I, with my limited means, can't take two girls on my hands at once; but, when Anita marries, as I mean she shall, Joanna shall have just as good a chance. There's no use making a secret about the main business of life; I never do." (Mrs. Basil and Miss Basil were both opening their eyes.) "Now, my good ladies," continued Miss Hawkesby, beginning to feel inspired by this homage to her originality, "what is there shocking in the statement that I wish to see my nieces marry well? I've no money to leave them; and what is to become of them without a husband apiece? They might teach, it is true; I see girls more ignorant than Anita go out to teach, poor things, but I never saw one make a fortune at it. It is much happier for a woman to marry a fortune, you may say what you please. I am not talking sentiment, but sense."

"Ah, my dear aunt, you were never married," sighed Anita, with an innocent air.

"Nor you, miss!" retorted Miss Hawkesby, sharply. "But my observation teaches me that the happiness of married life depends a great deal more upon sense than upon sentiment. Ho! ho! Well, I see by your looks that I am a shocking old woman. I've ruffled Miss Basil's delicate sense of propriety by talking so boldly on the main business of life in the presence of the innocent, unsophisticated Joanna. But, for my part, I believe in imbuing a girl early with proper views on this subject; it's of vital importance. Joanna will do well to cultivate any talent she may possess in the art of beautifying; she'll find it useful in these hard times and dressy days. That's always been my plan, and behold—Anita!"

And Anita was certainly charming to behold, Mrs. Basil thought, as she looked at the beautiful girl, pinning a rose in Joanna's hair; but Miss Basil sighed profoundly.

CHAPTER XXII.

STAT NOMINIS UMBRA.

"JOANNA!" said Anita, abruptly, "if Mrs. Basil will excuse us, take me out into the garden for a walk; I wish to see how much of it I remember.—I never drink coffee," she added, turning graciously to Mrs. Basil; it is so bad for me."

"Certainly," Mrs. Basil answered, beginning to think that Anita would be as pleasant a niece, all things considered, as she could find. "I'll send some iced tea out to you after a while, if you will have it." One could have thought, from the air with which she spoke, that she had a numerous retinue of servants at command.

"Thank you," said Anita; "I like iced tea."

The two girls walked through the garden in silence. If Anita remembered any thing there, she did not say so. At last, when they came to the scuppernong-arbor, she stopped. "Let us sit down," she said, with a frown; "I'm tired."

Joanna took out her handkerchief and carefully dusted the rustic seat. Then she put out her hands and shook the bench, to test its strength. "I must see that it is

"safe," said she, gravely; "things are very dilapidated about here."

"Thank you," said Anita, "how considerate for me, you dear Joanna! You have dispelled my frown, which is a valuable service. Never frown, Joanna, even when no one is by to see, for frowns leave their trace. Always cultivate a serene expression, it is a great beautifier. You see, my child, I know the effect of every thing. Beauty is a great art."

"Yes, Anita," said Joanna, with the manner of an obedient pupil.

Her sister burst into a laugh. "I've studied under Miss Hawkesby!" said she, with a touch of bitterness. "What did you think of her discourse at dinner to-day?"

Joanna paused; then she said, sedately, "I am too young to understand my aunt, I think."

"O happy Joanna! O discreet Joanna!" cried Anita, mockingly. "I saw it in your face; you were shocked, you knew not wherefore. I will tell you, it was the general tone. Yet, my aunt—I beg your pardon, *our* aunt—is not a bad woman. In her way she is a good woman. If she had a little more money, she would take you about with her as she does me; she would dress you, she would introduce you to society—the best society—she knows everybody worth knowing—she would instill into your mind the most valuable worldly wisdom—and then, the chances are ten to one you would disappoint her."

"I think it very likely," said Joanna, with a dejected sigh.

"Don't take an imaginary trouble so much to heart, my honest little soul; I've not answered her hopes, myself."

"You? O Anita!" cried Joanna, incredulously.

"You think it not possible?" said Anita. "Joanna! does the world possess any attractions for you?"

"Yes, certainly," answered Joanna, heartily.

"Would it make you happy, do you think, to go about with our aunt as I do?—to be always dressed, to be always in company, to be always admired?"

"Of course it would!" replied Joanna. "You might know that without asking. Doesn't it make *you* happy?"

"Do you know," said Anita, without giv-

ing any heed to this last question, "that if it were not for *me*, you might have all these things they call *advantages*, at my aunt's hands?"

"How?" faltered Joanna.

"If I were to marry," said Anita, "and relieve her of myself, you might step into my shoes."

"I do not understand these matters, Anita," said Joanna, primly, and turning her head away; "but"—with decision—"I would not have you take such a step for my advantage."

"Do you not hate me?" said Anita, with some asperity; "do not turn your head away—whatever your answer—out with it honestly—let us have no shams in this unworldly spot—I say, do you not hate me for standing in your way?"

"O Anita! Anita!" said Joanna, looking at her sister with tears in her eyes. "You are my sister, and I love you! I would rather you should have all these pleasures than I."

"Pleasures?" repeated Anita, with slight scorn. "I tell you it is the same old tune, eternally, and one grows so deadly weary of dancing to it. It would be no great kindness to abdicate in your favor, Joanna, my happy child. You don't know how hollow the world is; how we smile and smile, and sting each other, and distrust everybody."

"O Anita! when everybody must love you so!"

Anita laughed shrilly. "You think," she said, "that because I am pretty, and gay, and stylish, and all that, that men fall down and worship me? Don't you, you little goose? I've had my adorers, I own—but I never had one yet that was blind to my faults."

"Have you faults, Anita?" asked Joanna, simply.

"Haven't you found them out?" asked Anita. "But no; remain blind to them, yet a little while. I have seen you but a few hours—we have been strangers for years—and yet, Joanna, I really believe there is not one, among all the people I know, who would so readily sacrifice self for me as you would."

"Believe it, Anita! Believe it!" cried Joanna, ardently.

"And I admire unselfishness, heartily; but I am not sure that I would sacrifice myself for you," said Anita, slowly.

"I hope you never will," answered the generous Joanna, heartily.

"You are a droll child," said Anita, laughing. "If I were not so sure that you are happier now and here, under the care of that deliciously prim dragon, Miss Basil, than you could possibly be in the world you are so eager for, I'd marry a bald old gentleman I know of, and leave you the stage."

"Anita, don't do it, unless you like to. I do not wish to leave Pamela just now"—(Joanna had not yet given up the hope of being a comfort and a consolation)—"and I think a bald old gentleman is horrid."

"Of course I sha'n't," answered Anita. "I know a young man that is a great deal nicer; and he is not bald. But he is poor; think how horrid that is!"

"But he isn't so *very* poor, is he?" asked Joanna, anxiously.

Anita laughed. "He is too poor for me, Aunt Hawkesby would say," she answered, shaking her head.

"Anita, Anita," said Joanna, piteously, "don't talk as if life were a delusion and a snare, and utterly devoid of joy; don't! don't! Pamela preaches that enough; but she is old, and has had the rheumatism; and I am so young, I must believe in life. And you are only five years older than I, and so beautiful; say that you are happy, that you enjoy the world, and the people in it—oh, say it, Anita?"

"Look at me!" cried Anita, tragically, "Do I look unhappy? No, no, my child," she added, with smiles breaking over her face. "I see the servant bringing the promised tea. But one cup? Don't you drink it, Joanna? You should learn; it's a worldly accomplishment."

"Pamela thinks it bad for the nerves," said Joanna, primly. "She would never let me drink it."

"Oh, indeed? Then have the lemon, do!" said Anita, holding the slice toward her on the tip of the spoon. "Do take it; I sha'n't enjoy my tea unless you go halves."

So Joanna took the slice of lemon. She could have eaten a whole one at any time, as is the taste of Southern girls.

"Of course I enjoy the world and the people in it, Joanna," said Anita, as she gave the empty cup to the servant, a smart mulatto girl, who had been diligently studying the blue grenadine; "and, more than all, I do

enjoy a cup of iced tea. Did I make you believe me a misanthrope? My dear, I've a talent for exciting a sensation. I've told you once before that you need not take *au pied de la lettre* every thing I say. I love gayety, I love life. Does any thing ever happen here, Joanna?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, a great many things," answered Joanna, thinking chiefly of her name on the mimosa-tree.

"For instance, what?" asked Anita, incredulously.

"Why," said Joanna, a little confused, "you see the grandmamma gives dinings sometimes; and Mr. Hendall, he is here."

"Ah!" said Anita, with interest; "and you see a good deal of him, I suppose?"

"Not much," answered Joanna; "he has been away."

"But before he went?"

"I met him here in the garden sometimes," said Joanna, rather unwillingly.

"I suppose you found his conversation improving?" asked Anita, with infantile innocence that completely threw Joanna off her guard.

"Oh, yes," was the reply.

"What did he talk about—Darwinism? Everybody talks about Darwinism now, you know; and it isn't necessary to understand it at all. The moment you understand more about any thing than your neighbor does, you become a bore."

"I don't think he said any thing about *that*," said Joanna.

Anita smiled.

"Are there any other gentlemen to be seen here? Joanna, I am older than you—you should tell me *every thing*" (peremptorily).

"Yes, Anita," Joanna answered, hurriedly, with a guilty recollection of the name on the mimosa-tree; "there is that friend of 'Mela's who comes so often—"

"Ah! a beau of Miss Basil's?"

"No, Anita," replied Joanna, very gravely; "that is not applicable to Pamela. He is a kinsman and young, and his name is Basil Redmond."

"Hark!" cried Anita, suddenly catching her sister's arm. "What is that?"

"It is nothing but a whip-poor-will over there in the ravine," said Joanna, laughing.

"How white you are, Anita! were you frightened?"

"So it is a whip-poor-will," said Anita, relaxing her grasp of Joanna's arm. "What a charming note! Don't you love to hear them?"

"I would much rather hear the mocking-birds," Joanna answered. "I know where there are two nests; one in the pomegranate-bush, at the end of the raspberry-border, and one in the Banksia rose down there at the other corner; you shall have your choice, Anita."

"Thank you; but I interrupted you. What were you going to say?"

"I forget."

"About Mr. Romney, was it?"

"Mr. Redmond. Oh, I wasn't going to say any thing."

Anita made an impatient movement.

"Redmond? Oh, Redmond, I remember. He used to be here when I was a child. A horrid tease he was. I hear a step. I suppose that is he, coming to see Miss Basil? Let me pick my handkerchief up myself, child; you said I was pale just now; stooping will give me a color. I understand effects, you see."

Her face was rosy enough when she looked up.

"No; that cannot be Mr. Redmond," Joanna answered. "He is gone to Westport on business. It must be Mr. Hendall; it is!" And, with a quick impulse, she half rose to meet him. But Anita sat still and arranged the folds of her dress.

Young Hendall, hastening forward in the twilight, had eyes for Anita only. He did not speak to Joanna; he did not see her; he even turned his back upon her.

"This is the young lover that my aunt, Miss Hawkesby, disapproves of," thought she, with a feeling that it was no new discovery; and, after a moment of painful hesitation, she walked away.

It was no aimless wandering that led her now toward the retired little alcove where she had always carried her childish griefs and perplexities.

"Am I envious of Anita?" she asked herself, bitterly. "Of my sister, so sweet and good, reproaching herself for standing in my way? O wicked heart of mine! Did she not say that I would sacrifice myself for her? Am I to shrink at sacrificing my folly? No, no; I will not! I will not! I must be worthy of her."

And with these words, drawing her pen-knife from her pocket, she, by the glimmer of the stars, effaced her name from the bark, leaving, when all was done, only a blank.

How long she sat there afterward she did not know; but Miss Basil, ever watchful against malaria, found her there with her eyes fixed upon her ruthless work.

"Now, Joanna, you'll get your death! How can you?" she began, querulously; and then she stopped abruptly, for there was yet light enough to reveal to her one furtive, jealous glance at the mimosa-tree, the erasure of Joanna's name; and, forgetting all about malaria, she was utterly at a loss what to say. Who had cut the name away, she could not imagine—indeed, that was a question she was not concerned about—but, if Joanna was going to take the cutting out of that foolish bit of work in that stony way, what *could* she say? But Joanna saved her the trouble of speaking.

"I did it myself, 'Mela," said she, quietly, in response to Miss Basil's mute appeal.

"But—but," stammered Miss Basil, "what for?" That Joanna herself should have done so sensible a thing was alarming.

"Did you not tell me that it is your tree—your tree that you cherished," said Joanna, her voice rising sharply. "Besides, I will not permit liberties to be taken with my name."

"But, child," faltered Miss Basil, sitting down beside her, and not knowing even yet what she would say.

"'Mela!" cried Joanna, passionately, throwing herself on her knees, and burying her face in Miss Basil's lap, "O 'Mela, I am a child no longer!"

Some instinct of comprehension made Miss Basil put her hand on the girl's bowed head; but instinct carried her no further than this. Joanna had so often disclaimed the estate of childhood that the passionate protest she now made was nothing new to Miss Basil, and, her morality being so much stronger than her sympathy, she began forthwith to preach.

"You must guard your temper, my dear. I hope Anita's finery does not make you envious. You must remember that your positions are different, and you must not expect to receive such attentions as she receives. Your aunt and sister, between them, will bring about a state of things here, in the way

of worldly distraction, in which you, Joanna, cannot expect to share; and you must make it your study to strive for contentment and a quiet mind. And, Mercy guide us, Joanna! you make me forget what I came for. The Griswolds are all down with chills, and here you are, on this damp gravel, as if you never heard of such a thing! Come right away to the house and swallow a dose of ginger. Taken in time, I've known it to forestall and save a dose of quinine."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANITA'S LESSONS.

As Miss Basil predicted, Miss Hawkesby and Anita did indeed work a change in Mrs. Basil's humdrum household, a greater change than Joanna, with her very limited experience of life, was capable of anticipating. The Ruffners became devoted in their attentions, and not only did Mrs. Carl Tomkins and old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, with her niece Amelia, call early to renew their acquaintance with the admirable Miss Hawkesby and the charming Anita, but they were followed by all Middleborough, for in that social place the warm weather seldom interferes with visiting; and old Thurston was soon in so constant requisition as driver of Mrs. Basil's sorry little carriage, that the grass ran away with the cabbage-beds.

Miss Basil, strange to say, did not seem to take this much to heart. A curious change was coming over this estimable woman; she was possessed at times by a sort of subdued elation, that, while it did not interfere with the mechanical performance of her ordinary duties, seemed to lift her above care, while again an irrepressible secret anxiety and unrest would render her indifferent to all her old interests.

But Joanna, absorbed by the new life passing around her, failed to note this change in Miss Basil; she forgot even to be pained and jealous when she surprised her once tearfully studying some old letters. The sight could inspire, now, but a momentary curiosity; for was not Anita dressing for company?

And not for any price would Joanna forego the pleasure of assisting at her toilet. Anita, on these occasions, taught her so

many useful little arts, gave her so much good advice, and, when the delightful labors of the toilet were over, the blond and gracious beauty was so glorious to look upon! Nor was this all: Anita, the moment she was satisfied with herself, no matter how time pressed, no matter whom she kept waiting, immediately gave all her attention to improving Joanna's appearance. True, she didn't spare criticism; she mimicked Joanna's little prim ways; she gave derisive names to Joanna's little efforts at personal adornment; but she did it all with so airy a charm, and worked such improvement the while, that Joanna thought her fault-finding delightful.

"Come here, and be reconstructed," Anita would say. "I don't like your looks at all, miss; have I not forbidden you over and over again to wear blue? And I don't like this way of doing your hair; it is the result of a blind, inartistic admiration of my imperfections."

"You have no imperfections, Anita," says Joanna, gravely.

"There!" cries Anita, with mock exultation. "How admirably exact are my calculations! I knew I could compel the expression of your unbounded admiration. Joanna, my unsophisticated imitator, when will you be as wise as I am? When will you profit by my instructions? You improve, my dear; this head is well done"—she was pulling the structure of braids and puffs to pieces all the time—"but it is not at all appropriate. You youngling, you must not fancy that what suits me will do for you! What is the chief axiom in dress, Joanna? I've laid that law down to you a hundred times."

"To study the becoming," answers Joanna, with grave propriety.

"Right," says Anita. "Now, don't let your admiration for me run away with your sense. When you adopt my style, my dear, it is just as if a little wood-anemone should try to be a flaunting Japan lily."

"You are not flaunting at all!" cries Joanna, indignantly.

"Don't contradict, miss! Now behold, my anemone, is not that better?" Anita says, parading her grateful sister before the glass.

"O Anita, a thousand times!" Joanna exclaims, enthusiastically. "I'm a *great deal* better so."

"That's right, child! I'm glad to see

you have the faculty of honestly and openly admiring yourself. Never pretend not to know your own perfections; it is an abominable hypocrisy that deceives no one."

"Yes, Anita—I'll remember," said Joanna, with devoted faith. "I'm sure that even Mela would approve the—the *moral tone* of your instructions. And you are so good to me! I never knew, before you came, what it was to be really and truly happy."

The mocking smile that began to play around Anita's lips faded away—she never hesitated to laugh at Joanna in her light way—and a strangely-tender expression took its place. The tears stood in her eyes, and she stooped suddenly and kissed Joanna with fervor; but the next moment she turned away abruptly, exclaiming:

"I'm a doomed wretch! There are four forgotten people in the parlor, and a host of platitudes to be gone through with, woe's me! Joanna, happy Joanna, study the perfection of a wood-anemone at all points until I return."

Mrs. Carl Tomkins had called with Miss Caruthers and the Misses Jordane, two useful, nondescript indispensables of society, who, having a carriage and horses at command, were freely made use of by Mrs. Carl Tomkins, she not being endowed with these good gifts of Fortune.

Mrs. Carl Tomkins felt moved, this dull, warm season, to give a charade-party. "Why not?" she argued. "Charades, tableaux, etc., you know, ladies, are no uncommon amusement at watering-places and other summer resorts; why not make home happy, I say, by introducing kindred amusements at home?" Everybody agreed with her, and she continued: "Two charades, with five or six tableaux interspersed, would enable us to pass a dull evening very agreeably. People need enlivening; our town has never been so ineffably dull. What with the heat, and the dust, and the drought, all vegetation is burning up, and it would be a charity to do something to enliven people."

"It is to be hoped we may bring about a rain," said Anita, demurely. "I never knew a charade-party, or any thing of the kind, that did not give rise to storms."

But Mrs. Carl Tomkins either could not or would not understand Anita.

"Storms are not unusual," said she, "after a long, dry spell, such as we have at pres-

ent; but Mr. Tomkins thinks we sha'n't have rain in less than ten days, and surely we can get up the charades in less than that time?"

"It will take two weeks," said Anita, "to arrive at perfection; and by waiting that time we shall have a moon."

Some time was consumed in an animated discussion of preliminaries; and then, Anita having promised to be any thing, to do any thing, to say any thing, that was asked of her, the ladies departed to enlist all the talent of Middleborough in the cause.

"Now, Anita," said old Miss Hawkesby, "if you think that I am going to burden myself with this affair, you are much mistaken. I'll advise and direct, but I won't take a needle in my fingers.—This is the way, ma'am"—turning to Mrs. Basil—"when you've a young girl on your hands, your work is never done; and very unsatisfactory work it is, after all; doesn't pay."

"Miss Anita is a proof to the contrary," said Mrs. Basil, in a way that showed how far Anita had advanced in her good graces.

"Thank you, Mrs. Basil," said Anita, with a graceful bow. "My aunt is speaking under a premonition that I shall not follow her advice.—But, indeed, aunt, I will not have you trouble yourself; the weather is too warm, and you are never so amiable in warm weather. Joanna will give me all the assistance I shall need."

"Anita, it's a shame!" exclaimed Miss Hawkesby. "Are you going to make a slave of that child just as you do of everybody else?"

"Chains are never galling when worn unconsciously," said Anita, mockingly; and then she went up-stairs to prove the truth of her assertion.

Joanna was ready for the work.

"A charade-party!" she cried, eagerly. "O Anita, I cannot imagine it! It must be heavenly!"

"No, my dear innocent," answered Anita, coolly, "not at all. Heart-burnings, back-bitings, envyings, jealousies, strifes—are such things heavenly?"

"How, then, do you find any pleasure in such things?" asked Joanna, incredulously.

"You don't know how hard it is to break the chains that bind you," said Anita, somewhat sadly. "Besides, if not in society, where am I to look for distraction? Mind, I warn you, it won't do to look for happiness

there—if, indeed, happiness is to be found anywhere."

"O Anita, you grieve me!"

"Don't tear my lace, child!" cried Anita, with a sudden change of tone and manner, "or you'll grieve me."

Joanna was already at work upon one of her sister's costumes.

"No, I will be very careful," she answered, with a slight start. "But, Anita, is there any chance for me?"

"Oh, wisdom of innocence!" cried Anita, mockingly. "Hear that, now! Has not the righteous Miss Basil preached to you by precept? Have not I, who am not righteous, preached to you by example? And yet you would see the world for yourself?"

"Yes, I would," Joanna answered, unhesitatingly. "There is, there must be some happiness in it."

"For you, perhaps, Joanna," answered Anita, rather sadly; "you have so good a heart; and"—with one of those sudden changes of tone and manner peculiar to herself—"you are so blind, so very, very blind! Excuse me, my dear, but you have not my valuable faculty of *seeing into people*."

"Yet, for all that, I should like to go to this charade-party," said Joanna.

"Be a good child, and you *shall* go," answered Anita, with an encouraging pat.

"Ah, my white organdie! If it were possible to have it done in time!" thought Joanna; but she would not permit herself to express one wish on the subject. Anita was so very busy, it would be as much as she could accomplish to prepare her own many changes of costume; and then really the gentlemen took up so much time. Riding, or walking, or receiving calls, Anita had not a moment to spare; so Joanna decided that she would *have* to discuss the important question of making the organdie with Miss Basil. Miss Basil's opposition would be very discouraging, she knew; but there was no help for it; she could not be so selfish as to trouble Anita about her dress, and, if the white organdie could not be finished in time, there was the polonaise the grandmamma had given her. And Anita, the dear sister, she knew, would stop at the very last moment, though all the world stood waiting, to give her toilet the finishing touches. No wonder Joanna was blindly devoted to such a sister.

But Anita did not inspire every one with

the same unquestioning faith. She kept Arthur Hendall in a state of doubt so humiliating that he was piqued at last into renewing his half-friendly, half-sentimental attentions to Joanna. So, when at dinner that day Miss Anita announced that she would ride with Mr. Ruffner, Arthur determined to seek distraction in Joanna's company. He had not cared of late to linger with her in the garden, whiling away the idle moments in idle chat; it had grown too intolerably warm, was the excuse he offered himself for the neglect with which he had treated her of late; but he thought now that he could be sure of finding her in some one of her favorite haunts, and, to avoid seeing Anita ride off with his rival, he went, when the sun was down, to seek Joanna in her favorite alcove.

But Joanna was not there, had not been there, it was plain, for days past. Withered leaves, blasted by the heat, lay scattered about; dust stood thick upon the broken flora that occupied the corner; spider-webs festooned the entrance; and, greatly to his discomfiture, he saw that Joanna's name was erased from the tree. He had forgotten all about carving it there; but none the less was he angry and mortified at seeing it erased.

"Was it his aunt's doing? Or was it possible that Joanna?"—but this thought he would not permit to take definite shape; and, while he stood assuring himself that Joanna could never have misconstrued his friendly notice into a deeper sentiment, a voice behind him said:

"You were very good to carve my name there, Mr. Hendall; but I—erased it!"

"And why?" asked he, somewhat indignantly, as he turned and faced Joanna. "Were you displeased?"

"The tree is Pamela's favorite tree," said Joanna, calmly ignoring the question. "You should not have carved it there. Mr. Redmond planted it when a boy; I heard the grandmamma say so."

"Hang the tree!" exclaimed Arthur, impatiently. "What harm did I do it?"

"I cannot permit liberties to be taken with my name," said Joanna, with quite an air. She had been pleased with that expression when she had used it on a similar occasion in speaking to Miss Basil.

"You are grown suddenly particular," said Arthur, with something like a sneer. He felt that Joanna was setting herself in

array against him, and he resented opposition from her; it was bad enough from Anita, whose beauty and social advantages entitled her to the right of self-assertion. He little suspected that Anita, who had followed Joanna into the garden in search of flowers for her hair, was close at hand to take Joanna's part.

"Indeed, my little sister shows remarkable discretion," said she, coming suddenly into view from behind the oleander-bushes. "Now, I—I wonder if I should have had the good sense to erase my name, had you carved it there!" She spoke with that mocking air so difficult for any less ready person than herself to parry.

"Oh!" stammered Arthur, coloring, "I did not know that she had you for an adviser."

"Ah, Mr. Hendall, my sister's discretion is greater than you suppose. She is too wise to have a confidante."

"Really—" Arthur began, embarrassed.

"But I had nothing to confide," said Joanna, rather too eagerly. "Mr. Hendall carved my name on Pamela's favorite tree, and—"

"My child, you will lose your character for discretion, if you indulge in explanations," said Anita, gravely, but still mockingly. "Never make explanations—they are either unnecessary or they are useless. Now, in this case, I have heard already—and," turning to Arthur, with a significant look, not free from sternness, she added, "I could tell you the whole story!"

But, before Arthur was ready with a reply, old Thurston came hobbling up with the exclamation:

"Wait a bit there, ef you please, Miss J'anna! I'm all entire 'sausted with finding of you. Miss Pamela have *sont* me—"

"For what?" asked Joanna, with a frown. She thought it hard that Pamela should always interfere.

"A gentleman—" panted old Thurston, who, seeing Joanna become impatient, wished to be himself the more deliberate.

"A gentleman—well?" said Anita.

"—and his buggy for you to ride," concluded old Thurston, still speaking to Joanna.

"Mr?" cried Joanna, with eyes of astonishment. Then with a look and tone of utter blankness, she added, "You must mean my sister, Thurston?"

"It is probably Mr. Ruffner," said Anita, coolly, and without manifesting the slightest disposition to stir. "Let him wait."

"No, Miss J'anna," said old Thurston, solemnly. "It's Mr. Basil Redmond have returned this morning, and he is come with horse and buggy to take you out this evening."

"Mr. Ruffner is late," said Anita, stiffening.

But Joanna did not hear. "Then why," cried she, excitedly, to old Thurston, "why in the world did you not say so at once?" Then to her sister: "O Anita, the very first time in all my life! And my lovely new hat! Will these crape-myrtles do for your hair? They are the only pink flowers I have found; and I must not keep him waiting, should I?" She was trembling with impatience to be gone; and she failed to remark that Anita did not offer to go with her.

"Thank you," said Anita, softly, as she took the flowers; "yes; that will do. No; you should not keep him waiting." And, spurred by this admonition, Joanna ran.

"Ah, but her j'int is limber yet," muttered old Thurston to himself, with a melancholy shake of the head, as he walked away.

Anita, leaning against the mimosa-tree, watched her sister out of sight. "She has a child's heart in a woman's body," said she, slowly. "Would you hear my story now, Mr. Hendall?" Her face was very pale, but the sternness had disappeared.

"I'd rather tell a story of my own," said Arthur, meaningly.

Anita made a gesture of refusal. "I don't want to hear it!" she said. "The old ladies—all the ladies of your acquaintance—would say, 'What a dreadful girl Anita Hawkesby is!' but I have gotten this one good out of the thing they call society, I don't care for what people say—"

"Nor feel," interpolated Arthur, with bitterness.

"Possibly! And yet—some sort of heart I must have."

"I wish I might hear you say that interesting discovery is due to me," said Arthur.

"No, it is not," answered Anita, quietly; "it is due entirely to my sister Joanna. Don't misinterpret me, Mr. Hendall; I am not going to make myself out better than I am, if, indeed, I can make myself out at all. But Joanna has taken possession of just the mite of unselfishness that lurks in my composition."

"You were not formerly so fond of her," said Arthur, resentfully. "I never heard you mention her those happy three months I was your slave at Brookville."

"Don't use stereotyped expressions, Mr. Hendall. If you *were* my slave, it was your own fault."

"Did you know," said Arthur, eagerly, "that I went back there to see you? Sam Ruffner led me to believe that you were there."

"You should have gone to Rockville, heavenly place! I was there!"

"Would it have done any good?" Arthur asked, almost in a whisper.

"Not the least," answered the cruel Anita. "Aunt had the dyspepsia fearfully. Such biscuits! You can't think."

"They are not bad here?" asked Arthur, suggestively. Whoever talked to Anita must humor her.

"No; and I have found a sister," said she, turning abruptly to young Hendall.

"The little Joanna! As if she were to be compared to you!" said Arthur, impatiently. "And it is of *you* I would speak—"

"She is not to be compared to me," answered Anita, quietly. "I know the difference between us. But it is of her—of *her*, that I would speak. I came here with my heart closed against her; I didn't wish to love her; I felt no need of her; but I did not know my need. Joanna is rustic—an ignoramus, if you will—but she has a heart. She knows, for she has heard it from my aunt and from myself, that, if I were not in her way, *she* could dress as I dress, and could go out into the wicked world to be contaminated—and, Heavens! what ardent aspirations after the pomps and vanities! And yet the child loves me—loves me for nothing—what have I done to win her, through all these years? Not one particle of envy disturbs her heart. Since I have known Joanna I have felt that I, even I, might be capable of some generous impulses—some unselfish actions."

"You invest her with your own attributes," said Arthur.

"Don't be adulatory, don't, I pray you," cried Anita, with a deprecating gesture, "when I am in earnest."

"I hear and obey," said Arthur. "It seems to me you are hard to please of late."

"Nobody pleases me, now, but Joanna."

Tell me, Mr. Hendall, I'm curious to know, did you not carve her name on that tree before I came?"

"Yes," answered Arthur, with a sort of puzzled hope in his eyes; he was thinking of the oft-quoted effect of "trifles light as air."

"And the child cut it out *after* I came," said Anita, quietly.

"How should I know?" replied Arthur, impatiently. "What significance can you attach to all this?"

"I leave you to infer," answered Anita, coldly.

"I swear to you!" cried Arthur, "my heart—"

"I will have no swearing," said Anita; "it is useless. I have told you over and over again that I have no will of my own. My aunt will never see me marry a poor man."

"And if I were rich, then?" asked Arthur, bitterly.

"I could not marry you to please her," answered Anita, gently. "Else, indeed, your poverty would have made no difference to me." She put out her hand with a gracious tenderness as she spoke. "You have much to forgive, I know," she continued, sadly; "and I, much to repent of. Nor have I any thing to say in my defense, except, only, that until of late I have never truly known myself, I think. Selfish, mercenary, worldly, you may call me, if you like; but believe that I cannot be really false of heart. Oh, pray do not look so; Ruffner is coming—"

"O Mr. Ruffner!" cried Anita of the world. "Indeed, Mr. Hendall has been so entertaining I had forgotten my promise to ride with you."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LEAF OUT OF THE PAST.

"O 'MELA!" cried Joanna, as she came panting into the house. "Can it be a dream, or is life really beginning for me? And, oh! isn't it fortunate that my aunt gave me that lovely new hat? What should I do without it?"

"Joanna, don't be a fool!" said Miss Basil, uneasily. "See how hot and red you've made yourself! Try to acquire repose of manner, or you will never be fit for society." (Could this be 'Mela? Joanna asked her.

self, incredulously.) "Basil has come to ask you to ride—"

"Yes—I know," interrupted Joanna, speaking rapidly. "He is very good, and I am ever so much—indebted; and I do really believe, 'Mela, that he is indeed a friend."

"I hope you will endeavor to conduct yourself with strict propriety," continued Miss Basil, who never could resist the temptation to preach. "Wear your hat, and brush your hair off your forehead, do."

But this last Joanna had no intention of doing. Brush it off, indeed! Did not Anita wear hers down to her eyebrows?

"And, Joanna—stay a moment, child, I beg!" cried Miss Basil, as Joanna was rushing away. "Look in the second drawer of my bureau, under the yellow box, in the right-hand corner, and take that black-and-red scarf of mine. You may be out late, and at this season one needs a wrap in the evening: chills are very prevalent, and hard to eradicate from the system."

Astonishment deprived Joanna for a moment of the power of expressing her thanks. What change had come over 'Mela, that she should voluntarily countenance the pomps and vanities? Joanna knew that black-and-red tissue scarf well; it had been the admiration of her childish days; but never, within her recollection, had it been taken out of its place under the yellow box, in the right-hand corner of the second drawer of Miss Basil's bureau, except to be aired, twice in the year.

"O 'Mela!" she said, when she recovered her speech, "how good of you! And I will be so careful. Not a speck shall get on it; you will see." And away ran Joanna upstairs, two steps at a time, to adorn herself in the hat and scarf.

"Ah, me!" sighed Miss Basil, "I do wish to do my duty by that poor child, according to the station she must occupy; but it would be a dreadful thing if the love of finery should blind her to the great duties of life."

Joanna, when she had attired herself in the hat and scarf, looked a different creature; for between her gay adorning, and her supreme delight, she was radiant.

"Upon my word, girl," exclaimed old Miss Hawkesby, who met her in the hall upstairs, "I did not suppose you capable of looking so well. There is something of the Hawkesbys about you, after all. You may give me a kiss, child."

Thus encouraged, Joanna, though she held her aunt in great awe, impulsively threw her arms around the old lady, and said, in a palpitating whisper:

"It is the hat you gave me. What *should* I do without it?"

"H'm, h'm, h'm!" mumbled old Miss Hawkesby, looking grimly forbidding. "I begin to like you, Joanna, and I'll give you good advice. Enjoy yourself while you are young; for, as sure as you live, there'll come a time when you'll find pink roses no longer becoming. But you are only seventeen, a fool's age; now, don't you make the mistake of fancying that young Redmond is the only man in the world; for, I tell you, he isn't. You wait until I can show you; which I will do, as soon as I've settled Anita."

"Yes, ma'am," said Joanna, dutifully. She would have assented just then to any thing Miss Hawkesby might say. Then she went down-stairs, greeted Basil Redmond with a flattering cordiality, and was whisked away in the buggy before Sam Ruffner drove up for Anita.

Joanna's delight in this, her first invitation to ride, was absolutely without alloy. Was not her hat perfection? Was not her scarf as bright and gay as any displayed up and down the River Road, where all the world of Middleborough were raising a dust that afternoon? And what did Joanna care for the dust when she was helping to raise it? Does not everybody know that it may be one of the greatest pleasures in life to raise a dust? And, though Basil Redmond was not Arthur Hendall, he proved that in his own way he too could be charming.

"Joanna," said he, as they sped along, with the ends of Miss Basil's scarf fluttering gloriously behind, "when you were a little child, you had a strong belief in fairies; do you still hold to that happy faith?"

"Why, no, certainly," replied Joanna, with that excellent practical sense instilled by Miss Basil. "I am no longer a child, and 'Mela has taught me better. I know, now, that fairies are but a—but a *figment of the imagination*." The ride was inspiring, and Joanna excelled herself.

"I'm very sorry," said Redmond, with difficulty restraining a smile; "for I still believe in them."

"Oh!" said Joanna, in doubt. "But—*figuratively*—"

Redmond laughed good-humoredly. "For instance," said he, "the Fairy Good-Fortune—"

"Oh, now I know—I know you are speaking figuratively," said Joanna, in a tone of relief. Banter she could never understand.

"If she were to bring her rich gifts to 'Mela, as you call her?'"

"I don't think," said Joanna, gravely, "that 'Mela would approve of such—*speculations*." (Had not 'Mela voluntarily lent her that inestimable scarf? Could she, then, ungratefully ignore her teachings?) "I said something of the kind once, and she, very properly—rebuked me," continued Joanna, with resolute virtue; "for she did not wish me to become visionary and discontented. Pamela is a—*strictly moral* person," she added, earnestly, "and, therefore, she would never encourage idle expectations. There is no one to leave us a fortune; she told me so."

"She is wise, doubtless," said he. "She has taught you, then, that money cannot make happiness?"

"I don't know about that," answered Joanna, judiciously. "Pamela is often worried about money, and very careful to make as much of it as she can. What is a life-insurance policy?" she asked, suddenly. Joanna remembered, for the first time, what Mrs. Carl Tomkins had said at the grandmamma's dinner-party, and she began, now, vaguely to connect her remarks with the "Fairy Good-Fortune."

Redmond explained. He knew why Joanna asked, for Miss Basil had consulted him on the subject.

"I don't know that I quite understand it," said Joanna, with a sigh; "but I think it is lovely in Pamela to try to lay up money for me, when she knows I would spend it in pomps and vanities—that is, you know, I mean dress; and Pamela despises the pomps and vanities."

"And do you care so much for them?" asked Redmond, laughing. He had, indeed, no need to ask, for he had noted the conscious air with which the hat was worn.

"Ah, yes," Joanna answered, with a sigh; "I would like to—to accept 'Mela's views; but my sister, now, she teaches me that dress is a matter of importance."

"Oh, yes," answered Redmond, quickly; "I have been anxious to hear: your sister is

visiting you, and you are not disappointed in her?"

"*Disappointed* in her? Oh, but you should see her; she is an angel!"

"And what does your cousin think of her?"

"Pamela? Well, you know, she is not enthusiastic about any thing. She thinks my sister encourages vanity. But you don't know how good she is—Anita, I mean—nor how much pains she takes with me. Don't you see that I am improved in all my ways?"

"I don't know, Joanna," said Redmond, with a kindly smile. "I liked you well enough as I found you."

Joanna looked a little crestfallen.

"Oh," said she, "Pamela took great pains with me—I don't mean to be ungrateful—but we have lived *immured* here, and Anita has seen the world, which makes a difference."

"It does, indeed," said Redmond, briefly.

"Ah, see! There she is now!" cried Joanna, suddenly. "There is Anita! Look—look! she passes us now, in that white dress!"

And Anita, as she passed, bowed and kissed her hand, while Joanna turned and gazed after her eagerly. When she looked at Redmond again, she was surprised and mortified to see that he was very grave.

"Have I—have I—done any thing improper?" she stammered. "But it is only that she is all the world to me."

"That is well," answered Redmond, and smiled.

"If you knew her, you would understand," said Joanna, much encouraged. "And you shall see her when she comes back from her drive."

But Anita did not return to Basilwood that night. Soon after Redmond and Joanna arrived, Aleck Griswold came in with a twisted strip of paper that he said a lady had thrown him from a buggy, and asked him to bring to Miss Hawkesby; and Miss Hawkesby, going in to the light, read that Anita had gone to spend the night with Miss Ruffner.

"I would give something to understand the working of that young woman's mind!" said Miss Hawkesby, as she threw down the scrap of paper. "Anita never knows, two hours at a time, what she is going to do. But this comfort is mine, she is just as great

a puzzle to herself as she is to me. I know she can't enjoy herself with the Ruffners, where they are continually sh-sh-ing people for fear talking will disturb Mrs. Stargold. They are enough to kill her. I wish Anita may have a stupid time—don't you, Mr. Hendall?"

Arthur had a way of responding with alacrity to any notice from old Miss Hawkesby. He had been sitting in the shadow, maintaining a woe-begone silence, but he roused himself now, and made an effort to be entertaining; and the evening passed off much to Miss Hawkesby's satisfaction. She disagreed with Mrs. Basil, she contradicted Miss Basil, she snubbed young Redmond, and she encouraged Arthur in little impertinences about Sam; and when she went to bed she was in high good-humor with all the world.

It would have greatly enhanced the old lady's enjoyment could she have known how bored Anita was; but if she herself had been present, she could not have discovered the true sentiments of that accomplished little actress. Anita laughed sweetly at the tedious jokes Miss Ruffner made Sam repeat; she listened with an air of interest to the endless details Mrs. Ruffner had gathered about the people of Middleborough; she heard with sympathizing concern all Mrs. Stargold had to say about her symptoms; while she fought mosquitoes and sipped iced tea on the veranda, and heartily wished herself away.

It was worse the next morning, when everybody stepped ~~out~~ on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers, for fear of disturbing the invalid, who was in one of her dejected moods, and disposed to take a gloomy view of all things mundane. The burden of her lament now was, that she must die before the aim of her life could be accomplished. Anita wondered what the aim of her life could be.

Although the old lady was served with officious alacrity, it could not escape Anita's penetration that the whole household were pining for release. Sam yawned, and complained that the silence made him sleepy; Miss Ruffner, in a subdued voice, described the kind of mourning she should wear if ever she were called upon to put it on; and Mrs. Ruffner, in a sibilant whisper, stated confidentially that the prolonged confinement tried her nerves.

"So, Miss Anita, if you won't mind my running away, I need a new belt-buckle, and

I'll just walk in to Lebrun's. I must have out-door exercise." Lebrun's was always attractive to Mrs. Ruffner on account of the gossip to be gathered there.

Miss Anita did not "mind" at all; and Mrs. Ruffner, in defiance of her daughter's remonstrances that it was too warm for walking, started off armed against the heat with parasol and fan.

Sam then disappeared to indulge his propensity to sleep; and Miss Ruffner, like a devoted sister, availed herself of the opportunity to promote his interests with the fair Anita. If Anita was to be won, surely she could do it, and Miss Ruffner does not understand to this day how she failed; the girl listened with so charming an air of bashful interest while Sam's domestic virtues, his social tastes, his methodical habits, his lively humor, were under discussion.

But Anita, in calculating the good she had gotten out of society, might have included the enviable power she had acquired of enduring boredom with unruffled calm—a calm that was the result of extracting amusement secretly out of the unguarded revelations of human nature. She looked so innocent, and sweet, and *innocious*, while she sat there, convinced in her own mind that it was her duty—and her pleasure no less—to give Sam Ruffner's vanity a lesson. Indeed, giving useful lessons of this kind was the only good Miss Anita could charge herself with in her course through life. And Miss Ruffner, with no suspicion of the leaven of malice that possessed this gracious blond beauty, waxed so eloquent in whispers that at last old Mrs. Stargold called out querulously, from her room across the passage:

"Why can't you speak out? What are you plotting, Jane?"

But Jane had too much diplomacy to confess in open terms what it was she was plotting. She was sitting by the window, and she rejoiced greatly to see Basil Redmond coming in, for his visit would divert Mrs. Stargold's attention.

"Dear Cousin Elizabeth," she cried, "I see Mr. Redmond coming. You will be glad to see him, I know; I will admit him myself."

Anita started up; but, before she could effect her escape, Miss Ruffner had ushered Redmond into the room, with the brief introduction, "Mr. Redmond, Miss Hawkes-

by," and left them together, in order to attend upon Mrs. Stargold.

Each bowed low at the introduction; when they looked up, Miss Ruffner was gone. After one quick glance, Redmond stood still in his place, with his eyes cast down, in unmistakable embarrassment.

"Have we ever met before?" asked Anita, in her mocking tones. If she was embarrassed, she gave no sign.

"That is for you to decide," said Redmond, quickly, raising his eyes.

"I have some faint recollection of acquaintance in a previous state of existence," said Anita, folding her hands with a dreamy air.

Basil Redmond advanced a step, as if about to speak; but just then Miss Ruffner returned and said that Mrs. Stargold would see him immediately.

"And, Miss Anita," said she, as she led Redmond away, "I have a note to write for Cousin Elizabeth; will you amuse yourself with a book?"

Anita assented graciously; but was this the same girl, that sank trembling into a chair, covering her face with her hands, the moment she was left alone?

"Unhappy that I am!" she said, bitterly. "My fate pursues me! I was doomed to meet that man again. I came away from Basilwood last night; I endured a social martyrdom here in order to escape him; and lo! here he is! Did he expect to see me? Did he come to meet me? How bravely we met as strangers!" And Anita laughed softly to herself. "Well, it is three years since we parted; why not?"

And then Anita lapsed into a reverie; and "merely by a thought's expansion" found herself in a long, shaded walk she well remembered, fragrant with oleander-blossoms, and swept by the breeze from the sea. By sunlight, by moonlight, by starlight, she knew that walk in all its aspects; once she had taken shelter there from a shower.

"Ah, we staid too late in Galveston," she sighed. "We should have left, my aunt and I, before the oleanders began to bloom. But it was her fault that we staid. How angry she will be now!"

What was it Anita heard that recalled her suddenly? Did she dream? or did old Mrs. Stargold really say something about wishing her wealth to go to a Hendall?

"She means Arthur!" thought Anita; "and I refused him yesterday. If I had only waited I might have had the opportunity of refusing his wealth also."

Then she heard a door closed with decision, and immediately afterward a bell rang loudly. It was the hall-door bell that rang, and standing in the open hall was Mrs. Basil, with her chin in the air, and a look of triumph on her face.

"Oh, good-morning!" said Miss Ruffner to her as she came down-stairs. "I didn't imagine it was you. Mother is gone shopping, and Cousin Elizabeth is very particularly engaged; but come in."

Miss Ruffner had been Mrs. Basil's guest one whole summer, yet no warmer welcome than this did she ever give her.

"It is of no moment," said Mrs. Basil, cheerfully. "A call is out of place these warm mornings, I know; but I rode with Arthur to the station—he is called away suddenly on some business connected with that unfortunate road"—(Anita laughed to herself at the supreme good faith with which Mrs. Basil made this announcement—*she* knew better)—"and at Miss Hawkesby's request I came by to take Miss Anita home with me"—and here Mrs. Basil gave a hand in absent fashion to Anita—"in my poor carriage."

By this token Anita knew that Mrs. Basil too must have overheard Mrs. Stargold's words; when had she ever called her belongings "poor" before?

"Oh, I protest!" exclaimed Miss Ruffner; and, "Oh, thank you; but I must go, I think," said Anita, glad of an excuse to get away; whereupon an animated contest ensued, in the midst of which Mrs. Ruffner entered, breathless and fanning.

"Oh, my! so warm! so dusty! so tired!—Why, good-morning, Cousin Rowena. I've been to Lebrun's; shouldn't have been back this hour, but Mrs. Carl Tomkins was with the Jordanes in their carriage, and they brought me home.—I've bought my belt-buckle, Jane; how do you like it? A Cupid on a rose-bud; sweet, isn't it?"

"It's horrid, perfectly horrid!" said Miss Ruffner, remorselessly. "Why *will* you buy such odious things, mother?"

"Well, now, I don't know," said Mrs. Ruffner, good-naturedly, holding the purchase off at arm's length for unprejudiced inspec-

tion. "I call that *chaste*. There were other styles; but I couldn't give my mind to them clearly, for that queer Miss Crane was trying to explain a curious vision she had about us all."

("After my tragedy of 'The Secret of the Oleander-Walk,' comes the farce of 'The Milliner dreamed a Dream,'" thought Anita; but she looked as innocent as a fair, white lily.)

Mrs. Basil smiled with dignified superiority, as though *she* had never been imposed upon by Lydia Crane. Miss Ruffner saw the smile, and said, loftily:

"She wished to tell me something of the kind, but I checked her."

"Certainly, my dear Jane," said Mrs. Basil, approvingly. "The poor creature is insane on the subject of 'visions.'"

"But this really was so singular," continued Mrs. Ruffner, unabashed. "It actually amounted to a prediction of fortune; and, though I can't myself state it distinctly, it seemed to show that Ruffner is a very lucky name, because it takes seven letters to spell it."

"My dear Mrs. Ruffner," said Mrs. Basil, with an indulgent smile, "if there is any thing in the number of letters that compose a name, Hendall is as good as Ruffner.—Pray, Jane," she added, rising, "give my love to Cousin Elizabeth; I would not interrupt her on any account." It was seldom that she was permitted to see her cousin, but this was no longer a grievance.—"Miss Anita, I am at your service."

"I am ready," said Anita; and, after what seemed to her an endless five minutes of adieu, she was at last in the carriage with Mrs. Basil, and driving away.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNDER AN UMBRELLA.

ANITA, little of the dreamer as she looked, had gone back to the oleander-walk, the moment she entered the carriage, and did not notice that Mrs. Basil maintained a studied silence.

"I wonder," thought Arthur's aunt, "if this girl is moping about Arthur's going away?" She rather liked Anita, but she could not altogether approve of old Miss

Hawkesby as a "mother-in-law" for her nephew. It was rather too evident that in any battle that might arise between Anita's managing aunt and Arthur's managing aunt, it would be Anita's aunt that would come off with flying colors.

"My nephew left me this morning," said she, at last, abruptly, feeling that politeness required her to say something.

"I am very sorry," said Anita, softly. (Had he confided in his aunt? Anita ventured to look at Mrs. Basil with a sidelong glance, and felt assured that he had *not* confided in his aunt.)

"Oh, I resign myself to such contingencies," said Mrs. Basil. "Arthur has been educated to carve his own fortune" (she couldn't endure the thought that *her* nephew should be accepted for any possible wealth he might fall heir to). "The pursuit of his profession must often take him away from home; and any woman who marries Arthur will have to make up her mind to that."

"How very fortunate that I am not going to marry him!" said this wicked Anita; and she looked so superlatively innocent, that Mrs. Basil was at a loss to understand her. She hoped, she trusted—with a blind belief in her nephew's irresistibility, that was creditable to her heart, if not to her head—she trusted that Arthur had not been guilty of trifling with this fair young girl's affections.

"Oh," she stammered—"you know I was speaking in the abstract. I don't suppose that Arthur is thinking of marrying—just at present."

"No; I don't suppose that he is," answered Anita, carelessly. "Can you be so good as to put me down at Mrs. Carl Tomkins's? I must see her about these charades, you know; and you needn't wait for me. I don't know how long I may be detained; and I'll walk home; I sha'n't mind a walk."

"Here we are now," answered Mrs. Basil, poking old Thurston in the back with her ivory-headed staff—the only useful purpose it ever served her. This was not an elegant way of arresting her coachman's attention, but it was convenient, and Mrs. Basil had found it expedient to renounce many of the little elegancies of life. "I would be happy to send the carriage back for you, Miss Anita, but I am not very sure that it will be in my power to do so."

"It is not necessary—thank you," said Anita, as she sprang out.

Mrs. Carl Tomkins was in her parlor, a fanciful room, that loudly proclaimed her taste and culture—and thus obeyed an important canon of domestic art. There were brackets in profusion and variety; there were vases and statuettes, ditto; and pictures, ditto; there were so many crowded knick-knacks, that visitors were in perpetual danger of stumbling over some footstool, or tipping over some stand. Anita, however, showed herself a marvel of dexterity; she avoided every obstacle with an easy grace, and met Mrs. Carl Tomkins in the middle of the room.

And Mrs. Carl Tomkins had been just wishing to see her; she had so much to say about the charades and tableaux, and the small but portentous clouds gathering on the social horizon.

"When you undertake a thing of this kind," said the wise Anita, "you must deliberately make up your mind to immolate yourself. Nobody will thank you, of course; but you will have the consolation of knowing that virtue is its own reward. And you must do this; you must propitiate everybody—begin, now, by propitiating me. You've forgotten to invite my sister Joanna."

Mrs. Carl Tomkins stared a little, and colored; but she saw that Anita was in earnest, and, quickly recovering herself, protested that she thought she had invited Joanna.

"No, you forget," replied Anita, quietly. "I know it was an oversight, but I cannot come without the child; at least I would not like to." She spoke most sweetly and amiably, but it was plain that she meant to carry her point.

"She shall come," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins. Her list was swelling fearfully, but it would never do to refuse so important a member of her troupe as Miss Anita Hawkesby. "I commission you to make my apologies and invite her for me."

"Thank you," said Anita, with real warmth, as she rose to go.

"Oh, stay, just one moment longer!" cried Mrs. Carl Tomkins. "I wish to consult you about my dress; you have so much taste! I won't make you go up-stairs; I'll bring it down here, if you'll wait."

Anita consented to wait; and Mrs. Carl Tomkins went to bring her dress. She did

not return immediately; indeed, she was gone so long that Anita was beginning to be impatient, when the servant ushered a gentleman into the parlor—an event for which the restless occupant was totally unprepared, for the very faint tinkle of the door-bell had not made itself heard beyond the kitchen-entry where it hung.

It was Basil Redmond. He came in dazzled by the light, and, nearly stumbling over a footstool, was by Anita's side before he recognized her.

Anita could neither speak nor move; the world seemed to be going round and round with her, and she felt that if she attempted to rise she should fall; if she attempted to speak she should utter a cry; but outwardly she was calm—until he called her name.

"Anita!" he cried, stretching out his hands; and it would be hard to say whether he was glad or grieved.

And then Anita began to tremble visibly. In vain she knit her fingers in order to steady herself.

"Yes, it is I, Anita," she faltered.

The silence, though it lasted but an instant, had become intolerable. She felt that she must speak; but she was frightened at her own voice, and she turned away and covered her face with her hands.

"You and I cannot meet as strangers, Anita—you know it," said Redmond. "I have not forgotten, and you have not forgotten."

"I promised my aunt," said Anita, brokenly, "that I would never see you again."

"I made no such promise," said Redmond; "but twice this day, when I have not sought you, when I have not expected to meet you, I have found you. Heaven wills it, Anita."

"There is Mrs. Tomkins, I hear her coming," said Anita, hurriedly, and struggling to speak calmly; "meet her, oh, rise and meet her; don't let her notice me."

Basil obeyed, wondering in his heart why women were so much afraid of each other. It was very easy to keep Mrs. Tomkins from noticing Anita; she was so glad to see Mr. Redmond; so kind of him to call! And had he brought her the book she wanted?

Yes, Mr. Redmond had called purposely to bring her the book. He was very sorry that he had not received her note until too late the evening before to attend to her re-

quest; and all the morning he had been with Mrs. Stargold. He was now on his way to Basilwood, and stopped merely to deliver the book, and to point out to her a certain passage. By the time all this was done, Anita had recovered herself.

"Mrs. Tomkins," said she, rising, "I suppose you cannot show me that dress now; but I will call again."

"Oh, my dear Miss Anita, I beg a thousand pardons!" cried Mrs. Carl Tomkins, with effusion. "Mr. Redmond—excuse me; but you know Mr. Redmond."

"I know Mr. Redmond very well," said Anita.

"You know," said Mrs. Carl Tomkins, "I was dressing in my costume; I thought you could judge of the effect so much better; and just as I was ready to come down, the servant told me a gentleman had called; of course I had to dress again. I do hope you will excuse me."

"Oh, certainly," said Anita, "but I must go now."

She looked at Redmond as if she would have him remain behind; she even shook her head slightly; but he would not see, he would not understand.

"I promised my aunt," said Anita, when they were outside the gate, "that I would never see you again."

"So you told me a little while ago," said Redmond. "But you are bent upon returning to Basilwood, and it is high noon of summer day; you have no parasol, but I've an umbrella, and it is too heavy for you to carry; do you not see that I *must* go with you?"

Anita laughed rather nervously.

"Besides, Anita," he continued, eagerly, "was it just, was it reasonable, in Miss Hawkesby to exact any such promise? She noticed me in the most flattering manner, you know that she did; she was obliged to foresee the consequences, yet she encouraged me, only to disappoint me cruelly at last."

"You say that because you do not know my aunt," replied Anita. "She never encourages poor young men; but she always notices them flatteringly if they are at all clever. She likes clever young men, even if they are poor; but not for me. Did she not warn you over and over again that she would not see me wedded to poverty? My aunt is very conscientious about that; she deceives no one."

"She deceived me," answered Redmond, indignantly. "She did worse—she almost destroyed my faith in you. She might at least have let us have an explanation. I never should have understood; I should have thought you as cold, and selfish, and calculating as herself, but that we had friends to set the matter right in my eyes."

"Ah, Mr. Redmond, don't condemn my aunt by wholesale," said Anita, with something of her natural lightness. "You don't know what cause she has to rage against you. Before you came I was engaged to old Colonel McHenry. He was a very nice, middle-aged gentleman, you know he was; he had nice manners and a handsome wig"—Anita was beginning to be herself, or rather her other self, again—"and a very respectable barytone voice, that was so useful in a duet whenever by any chance he could hit the right key; and I never saw such horses! I never rode in such a carriage! They suited my aunt and me perfectly, and I promised to marry him. I didn't think ill of him; and he was desperately in love with me. Oh, I know what that means! He was *able* to show it. He gave me such a ring, and sent me every day the most costly flowers, cut by a florist, sir; and my poor aunt was so happy! I might have been Mrs. McHenry, glittering in diamonds, and riding in the easiest carriage that ever rolled an indolent woman over the beach at Galveston—and I should have been at peace with my aunt!"

"Poor Anita!" said Redmond; "what a pity that ever I crossed your path!"

"But you came," continued Anita, and her voice trembled and broke, "and—and—I found out that I did not wish to marry Colonel McHenry. I found out—"

"Anita, my dear Anita! three years have not changed you!"

"Yes—three years have changed me; you do not know. Three years ago I was at heart too true to marry Colonel McHenry when I found I did not, could not love him. I told him so; and he said he would take the risk. I told my aunt so, and she said I was a fool. I was only nineteen, and of course I was a fool!" she broke out passionately. "But," she immediately resumed, more calmly, "a fool may have a head too strong for the feeble body. My aunt is not bad-hearted; she desires my good, provided she may choose it. She became alarmed for my

health, and we effected a compromise: she absolved me from my engagement to Colonel McHenry upon my giving a promise that I would never see you again."

"I do not think you are bound to keep it longer; if you were a child, then, in experience, you are a woman now. Anita, I am not a rich man; in all probability, I shall never be a rich man; but, in marrying me, you would not be wedded to poverty; I am young and strong; I could always secure you a comfortable home. Why should you submit longer to your aunt's tyranny?"

"You mistake," answered Anita, quietly; "my aunt does not tyrannize over me. She is very generous and indulgent to me; but we don't always agree. And then, again, I am not the same woman I was three years ago. You knew me very well then; would I have told you as much about myself then as I do now? You see I have learned not to care. Three years ago I could not bring myself to marry Colonel McHenry without love—not all his wealth could tempt me. But to day—"

"You would?" asked Redmond, bitterly.

"No," said Anita, very low, "I don't think I would. But don't misunderstand me," she added, quickly. "I would hardly be so frank if you were the cause. Do you know my little sister Joanna?"

"Yes," answered Redmond, rather stiffly. He thought the question irrelevant, and he was beginning to fear that, after all, this Anita, whom he thought he knew so well, was as heartless and as vain as the world believed her to be.

Anita brushed away a tear. "That child," she said, in a voice trembling with feeling—"that dear child loves me as no human being ever loved me. Nay; don't make protestations; I never doubted you. But you had some provocation; Joanna had none. I may have been gracious and charming to you; Joanna I utterly neglected; for years I forgot her; but, when I came, she received me with open arms. She has given proof that she could make any sacrifice for me; she has faith in me—she has restored me to my better self—if I have a better self."

"Joanna, then, is to be my rival?" said Redmond, with a hesitating smile.

"I rather think, if Joanna knew all that

would be your warmest advocate," said Anita, with a vivid blush.

"For Heaven's sake, then, let her know all!" cried Redmond, eagerly. "Has she any influence with Miss Hawkesby? What are you going to do about that promise? Anita! Anita! I cannot give you up! Think what it is to have found you again so unexpectedly."

Anita sighed, but was silent.

"We are at the gate," continued Basil Redmond, eagerly. "Shall I go in, or shall I turn back? Are you going to adhere to your promise?"

"You shall go in," answered Anita, promptly. "I will have no concealments. As to my promise—"

"It is broken already!" cried Redmond, exultantly.

"I will consult with Joanna. And see! there she is now, in the piazza, up-stairs, watching for me."

They had come round the bend in the walk, that brought them in view of the house; and Anita, looking up, kissed her hand to Joanna, who turned immediately and ran; but she was at the front-door when Redmond and her sister came up the steps.

"O Anita!" she cried, "Aunt Hawkesby has been so worried about you. She set me to watch; and I just stopped one moment to tell her that you've come, and Mr. Redmond with you, and a big umbrella. You haven't a headache, have you, Anita?"

"No, child," answered Anita, with a kiss. "I stopped this morning to see Mrs. Carl Tomkins, and I am commissioned to invite you to the charade-party."

"O Anita! this is too good to be true!" cried Joanna, clapping her hands. "And I did so wish to go!"

"Have you no word for me, Joanna?" asked Redmond, holding out his hand.

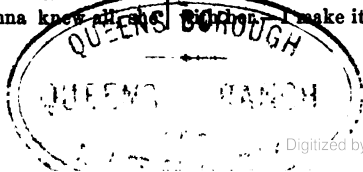
"Oh, yes! You've seen my sister, and I am so glad.—But Aunt Hawkesby is very impatient, Anita. She says you must go immediately to her."

"Has she her head tied up, Joanna?" asked Anita.

"Why, yes—in a silk handkerchief," answered Joanna, with a look of wonderment at her sister's astuteness.

"A bad sign," said Anita, shaking her head. "She has eaten something to disagree

with her. I make it a point," she continued,



turning to Redmond, "whenever my aunt sends especially for me, to inform myself whether her head is tied up or not. Every thing depends upon that. Unless I particularly desire to be refused, I never make any request of her when she puts on that silk handkerchief.—It is white, with a purple border, isn't it, Joanna?"

"Yes," said Joanna, with uneasiness; "but won't she be vexed if you keep her waiting?"

"Certainly she will," answered Anita, as she turned to go up-stairs. "That white-silk handkerchief with the purple border is her battle-flag. I know it well.—Good-morning, Mr. Redmond; I am much indebted for the shelter of your big umbrella."

"My sister," said Joanna, sedately, seeing that Redmond looked very grave, "indulges in—*persiflage*, sometimes. It is a way she has; but she has often told me that all she says is never to be taken seriously. I know, by my own dealings with Pamela, that young persons cannot always please old persons; but that does not mean that there is no respect nor affection between them."

"No; I suppose not," said Redmond, absently.

"You wish to see Pamela?" Joanna asked. "I will tell her that you are here." But she did hope he would not stay long. She herself wished to see Pamela about her dress.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MISS HAWKESBY TO THE RESCUE.

MISS HAWKESBY lay on the lounge with her head tied up in a silk handkerchief, as Joanna had said. She had a book in one hand and a fan in the other, and, from her bound-up head on the pillow to her slippered feet sticking out from her flowered dressing-gown, Miss Hawkesby looked stormy.

When Anita entered, "So," said she, looking at her niece over her spectacles, "you have come at last, Miss Anita Hawkesby? Well, and what have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing; I don't feel like saying a word," replied Anita, sinking into a chair. "I'm worn out."

"Anita, don't aggravate me," said Miss Hawkesby, sharply. "I won't be aggravated!"

"No, aunt; I hope not," said Anita, meekly.

"You know very well that you deserve my displeasure. Where is your promise to me? Don't try to deceive me. You have seen Basil Redmond; Joanna has told me."

"If I had wished to deceive you," said Anita, quietly, "I could easily have prevented Mr. Redmond from coming in. But you know very well, aunt, that, whatever faults I may have, I don't practise deception. Yes, I have broken my promise, and you shall judge whether or not I did it willfully. When I knew that he would be here, I staid away purposely; you can't suppose I did that for my own pleasure. You know how gay and agreeable the Ruffners are; when he came to see Mrs. Stargold, I came away with Mrs. Basil—"

"Yes, I sent for you," said Miss Hawkesby, tartly.

"I should have come away all the same. I stopped at Mrs. Carl Tomkins's; could I tell he would come there, too? He happened to have an errand there; he did not know that he would meet me. Mrs. Tomkins had gone out of the parlor, and we met, and we spoke alone. Aunt Hawkesby, you know the whole story that went before this; was it possible, after meeting him thus—was it possible for me to adhere to that promise?"

"What is he doing here? How does he happen to be here so opportunely?" asked Miss Hawkesby, angrily.

"Why should he not be here? You know that he is related to the Basils; that we were children here together for a little time; and you know that Miss Basil herself had charge of him in his childhood—"

"And I know," interrupted Miss Hawkesby, irately—"I know that he was a most unruly boy, giving old Judge Basil a world of trouble. Mrs. Basil herself has told me all about it."

"And you know," continued Anita, her color rising—"you know that, in spite of all odds against him, he is now a young man of promise. You know that he was no idle waif drifting about Galveston; you know that he was sent there on business of importance by a gentleman well known and well esteemed in California; that he had letters to the best people, and was well received everywhere."

"Well, well, Anita," said Miss Hawkesby,

who did not wish to quarrel outright with her niece, "you needn't wax eloquent, though it does become you. It is three years since; in that time I hope you have learned some sense."

Miss Hawkesby was very comfortable at Basilwood; she didn't care to leave just then. She had intended to remain during the greater part of the summer, and not more than three weeks had yet passed. It wasn't pleasant to have her plans interrupted; and, besides, she doubted the wisdom of running away from danger. She hoped, she believed that she might trust to the judgment and discretion Anita must have acquired in those three years. Surely Anita must have *learned some sense* in that time; but she did not like the warmth with which young Redmond was defended, and it was no slight relief to hear Anita say, in reply:

"You know I always defend those who are attacked unjustly, aunt; I've gained quite a reputation in society for this amiable trait. And, for the rest, I hope I have learned some sense; I've had some useful lessons."

"Yes," said her aunt, not without bitterness, "you begin to understand now that I had always your good at heart. But I made one great mistake, my young lady—a mistake I'll never make again. I should have held on to Colonel McHenry for you. It was all your own fault, Anita; you wouldn't let me hold on to him for you—you, with your crude notions about honor and truth, and that sort of stuff, a mere cloak for childishness and willfulness—"

"Aunt," said Anita, coolly, "you talk so wickedly it is well there is nobody by to hear you but myself."

"You wouldn't let me hold on to him for you," pursued Miss Hawkesby, "and so he married that designing widow. You've been a great disappointment to me, Anita, a great disappointment; and I may thank Basil Redmond for it. I've little cause to like him. I can never go back to Galveston again, and I had so many friends there; but I shall never go there again where people say of me, 'Oh, Miss Hawkesby thinks herself so clever, and that little widow outwitted her at last!' You've been a great disappointment to me, Anita."

"I'm sorry, aunt," Anita replied, with a sigh; "but, indeed, if it's any satisfaction to you, I've been a disappointment to myself."

"It is a satisfaction in one sense, because I hope you'll profit by the lesson. You'll know better, now, I trust, than to throw away all your prospects in life upon any impecunious young man. Now, this young Redmond—I can't say that he is without merit; he had the civility, last night, to leave it for me to acknowledge our previous acquaintance or not, as I chose; and I chose not to do it; I wished to give him a hint as to the permanence of my sentiments. You must marry well, Anita; it ought to be a matter of duty with you. Now, how much longer are you going to keep our friend Mr. Merwin in suspense?"

"The venerable Mr. Merwin!" said Anita. "Oh, dear! the rich men are old, and the young men are poor; what an unequal world is this!"

"Anita, you are selfish and ungrateful!" cried Miss Hawkesby, angrily. "To what end have I dressed you, taken you about, and given you, at a heavy expense, every advantage in my power?"

"To the end that I might marry a bald old gentleman with a plenty of money," answered Anita, with *malice d'enfant*.

"Exactly so," replied Miss Hawkesby, ignoring the impertinence of this speech. "If a good match is offered you, you ought to be willing to get out of the way and give your sister a chance. You know very well I'm not able to keep you both in dress, and so forth."

"Ah, my poor little Joanna!" cried Anita, with feeling. "I ought to be willing to make some sacrifice for Joanna."

"I don't see any great sacrifice in a life of perfect ease and elegance," retorted Miss Hawkesby, sharply. "You'll never have such a chance again, Anita. And what can you do for yourself but marry a man of means? Why, you can't teach; you don't know any thing."

"No," said Anita, with humility; "I am very ignorant. For Joanna's sake—give me time to think about it, aunt; I would do much for Joanna. I stopped at Mrs. Carl Tomkins's this morning, and risked a long walk in the sun, solely for the purpose of making that woman invite her to that charrade-party."

"You don't mean to say she hadn't invited her?" cried Miss Hawkesby, indignant. "That comes of poor Joanna being out of the world and having no advantage."

"Oh, she has invited her *now*," said Anita; "and the question is—her dress. Joanna must have a dress."

"There it is, in the very beginning, you see!" cried Miss Hawkesby. "Of course girls must dress; and how can I dress two girls decently on my limited means? Joanna can't go into the world wearing your second-best things; it would mortify me, and ruin her opportunities. You see, Anita, the advantage it would give her if you were well married."

"But I can't marry between this and the charade-party, and meantime she must have a dress."

"Well, I gave her a white organdie—"

"But it isn't made; and you know that Miss Basil could not make it as it should be made."

"Heaven forbid that she should touch it!" ejaculated Miss Hawkesby. And thereupon she and Anita resolved themselves into a committee of ways and means; but the battle was not yet over between them.

Meantime, Joanna, after long and impatient watching, had at last the satisfaction of seeing Basil Redmond depart. The moment he was gone, she waylaid Miss Basil.

"'Mela! 'Mela!' she cried, 'I am invited to the charade-party! There is an opportunity, you see, for the white organdie! I surely have the best aunt in the world. What *should* I have done without that hat yesterday—and the scarf too—I'm sure I don't know. And now, here is this dress, the *very thing*! If I could only manage to have it properly made!' (This with a profound sigh.)

"Certainly, Joanna," said Miss Basil, gravely. "If you go into society at all, you should go well attired. It is fortunate that Miss Hawkesby gave you the dress; but I trust you will not place your hopes of happiness in vanities like these; otherwise I should think prosperity not to be desired for you until you should have learned to rule your spirit."

"O 'Mela, what has ruling my spirit to do with making my dress? As to my hopes of happiness, they all depend upon my having my dress made like Anita's silver-striped tissue."

"O Joanna, impossible!" cried Miss Basil, aghast. "Only consider, child, that dress of Anita's is so elaborate! I'll take the work in hand myself. Simplicity of attire—"

"'Mela, I hate simplicity of attire! And I do admire elaborate things. Such ruffles! Such puffs! Ah, 'Mela, if you would but help about the flounces, Anita would show me how."

"Anita is certainly very kind to you, child; kinder than I had supposed she would be. Anne Amelia Griswold, now—"

"O 'Mela, if you love me, don't name Anne Amelia in connection with my dress! She would be the ruin of it. Her gores do *dig* into such dreadful horns. Pamela, I don't wish to hurt your feelings, but really there is no comparison between the set of your dresses and Anita's."

"I believe you are right, child," said Miss Basil, with a strange flutter. "I think of sending my new black challis to be made in Westport."

Joanna stood for a second or two agape with astonishment.

"Yes; I think—I think—it would be well to do so—that is, if you can afford it," she stammered.

"Of course I can afford it," said Miss Basil, sharply. "Joanna, did you ever know *me* to do any thing extravagant?"

"No, 'Mela," replied Joanna, penitently.

"I have always considered money a grave responsibility," pursued Miss Basil, in a tone of injured innocence; "I trust I always shall do so, in whatever station of life it shall please God to place me."

"Yes, 'Mela," said Joanna, with simplicity. "Of course you will."

"I should never be tempted to spend my all on a trumpery picture," continued Miss Basil, virtuously.

"Ah, 'Mela!" interrupted Joanna, with a sigh.

"But I do hope and trust that my sense of duty would never forsake me under any circumstances; and I've always thought it my duty to encourage the industrious poor. If I send my dress to Westport, Anne Amelia's feelings might be hurt," concluded she, regretfully.

"But I shouldn't mind her feelings half so much as a good style of cut," said Joanna, ungrammatically, but very decidedly, being, like most very young people, quite callous where she was not ardent.

"She has just bought a new machine, too," continued Miss Basil, dolefully. "The

thought of sending my dress to Westport did not originate with me—"

But here a knock at the door, loud and imperative, put a stop to the discussion.

"And so you are invited to the charade-party, Miss Joanna?" said Miss Hawkesby, upon being admitted. She looked formidable and aggressive, for she had not got the better of Anita, as she had hoped to do, and she had been kept knocking at the door longer than she liked. The sight of her made poor Joanna quake in anticipation of some insurmountable obstacle to her pleasure.

"I've been invited," stammered she, deprecatingly.

"I don't know what Mrs. Carl Tomkins could have been thinking of," said Miss Hawkesby, terrifically—and poor Joanna's heart stood still—"not to invite you at first; you are as much my niece as Anita is, and it is my pleasure that you should go."

"O aunt!" said Joanna, looking up with a grateful expression that charmed Miss Hawkesby, who, with all her worldliness, possessed more heart than the world was disposed to give her credit for. "I can wear my beautiful white organdie you gave me," added Joanna, the soft color rising in her cheeks.

"As a winding-sheet, I suppose?" said old Miss Hawkesby, with grim humor.

"If Joanna would content herself with simple attire—" began Miss Basil.

"Ah, no, 'Mela,'" interrupted Joanna, with a groan.

"You surely would not be guilty of the folly of attempting to make such a dress yourself?" said Miss Hawkesby, turning to Miss Basil with a bellicose air. "Why, *you* do not understand dress! Now, I mean no offense, Miss Basil; I have a great esteem for you. You have trained up this child admirably; she is a good child, quiet, unselfish, and attentive, and, despite a few inevitable *gaucheries*, very well bred. I am aware that she owes all this to you; but I would like to have her owe something to me. Positively, I can't have you botching that dress, Miss Basil. It must go to Lebrun's. I'll write a note. I suppose that airy piece of a servant you call Candace can take it? Lebrun must send some one immediately to fit the dress; and we will go into town, before the affair comes off, to select any little extras that may be needed. I believe in dress, myself."

"O—h!" said Joanna; she could say no more than this; but Miss Hawkesby seemed content therewith, for she smiled and nodded, as she withdrew to write her note.

Miss Basil, feeling that a grave crisis had come, rose and laid her hands on Joanna's shoulders, saying, with portentous solemnity: "My child, I hope you will not let this corrupt your heart?"

"*Corrupt—my—heart?*" repeated Joanna, with slow emphasis. "No; I don't think it can corrupt my heart."

When Joanna went up-stairs to tell the good tidings to Anita, she was shocked to see that her sister had been crying.

"Anita! Anita!" she entreated; "what is the matter? Are you ill? It was that walk in the sun. Let me get you something." It was odd to see how Joanna unconsciously copied Miss Basil.

"No, Joanna, I am not ill; and I am not crying. You never saw me shed a tear in your life; it was an optical illusion, remember."

"Whatever you please, Anita," said Joanna, bewildered; "but something is the matter!" Whereupon Anita put her arms around her, and began to cry afresh. "Is it because Mr. Hendall is gone away?" said this simple Joanna. "Anita, I am very, very sorry; but you know he will come back?"

"I don't know whether he will come back in my day," said Anita, the unaccountable, beginning to laugh. "But is that any thing to cry for, do you think? Mr. Hendall is very clever; he will do very well, if his aunt doesn't spoil a good civil-engineer by interfering to make an indifferent planter. That's none of *my* wisdom, understand; but it's what I've heard people of judgment say. I like him well enough; but he's not the kind of poor young man, you see, that I could cry for."

"O Anita! then you are going to marry that bald old gentleman?" cried Joanna, in a tone of awe.

"My aunt says I *must*," replied Anita. "Listen, Joanna"—and then Anita entered into an explanation of Miss Hawkesby's views and circumstances—her desire to introduce Joanna to her world, her inability to maintain two young ladies in society, and her anxiety to see Anita suitably married, that she might take Joanna under her wings.

"And you don't wish to marry him!" cried Joanna. "It shall never, never be!

Let me see my aunt; I can make her understand. I will go to her this moment—"

"You will do nothing of the kind!" said Anita, pushing her into a chair. "You have heard Aunt Hawkesby's side of the story; now hear mine. Did I not tell you that I could not be sure I would sacrifice myself for you?"

"And you never, never shall!" cried Joanna, vehemently.

"Not in this instance, for it is impossible," said Anita, with decision. "And I will tell you why, Joanna." But Anita paused a long time, holding her hands clasped tight against her heart. She did not believe that it was wise to have confidantes; she knew that it was weak; she said, now, that she ought to be strong in her own strength and decide for herself; but she felt that there was no strength in her; and so she would tell this child her story. "Joanna," said she, at last, "you are in many things but a child, you have no knowledge of the world, you have no experience of life, but you are wise, because your heart is pure. Tell me what I must do." Then Anita told her story, which Joanna heard trembling from head to foot. But indignation against her aunt, sympathy for Anita, were not the only feelings that possessed her, nor the strongest. When Anita had made an end and asked, "Now, Joanna, tell me what I am to say to Basil Redmond in his poverty?" Joanna cried out, passionately:

"It is mean of him! It is mean of him, to come and take away Pamela first, and then take away you too! And Pamela won't like it either, you'll see!"

Anita laughed.

"Then you are in favor of the bald old gentleman, I am to suppose?"

"No, no, Anita," said Joanna, beginning to cry. "I—I—don't know—"

"You see," said Anita, gravely, "I owe a great deal to my aunt—I ought to please her. If I marry this man with money, I should please her; she would feel repaid for all she has done for me; and then, not only would she be able to do as much for you, but I too could do so much for you. This marriage of mine would be a great advantage for you."

"You are not going to marry him, are you, Anita?"

"On the other hand," continued Anita,

"if—if I ran away with Basil Redmond, for instance—"

"Oh, don't, don't, Anita! Think of Aunt Hawkesby. Think of Pamela."

"And think of myself!" cried Anita.

"Now, I *might* be happy with him."

"O Anita! whatever will make you happy, let that be! I cannot see you unhappy; it would break my heart."

"Then think of my aunt—how ungrateful to her!"

"Yes, Anita; and she is so kind to both of us. Let us consider Aunt Hawkesby."

"But money can never make happiness, Joanna. Think of *me*, going about, a gilded misery!"

Then Joanna began to wring her hands in sore distress.

"O Anita! leave them both alone, leave them both alone. Cannot I suffice you?"

"Poor little martyr to 'a divided duty,'" said Anita, soothingly. "I don't know that you can 'suffice me;' I wouldn't like to say, positively, that you could, for your day, too, will come; but this I know, you shall be always dear to me. Whatever I may do, whatever step I may take, we will always be the same to each other. Shall we not, Joanna?"

"Anita, what are you going to do? Let me speak to Aunt Hawkesby?"

"No, Joanna, no; decidedly not," said Anita, frowning. "Forget what I've been talking about, if you can. Let us talk about your dress; is it not to be made at Lebrun's?"

"Yes," Joanna said, with a shy smile; "Aunt Hawkesby is so kind to me; but aren't you happy, Anita—are you not going to be happy?"

"Yes," replied Anita, laughing; "certainly I am."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT FROM MOSS-ROSE-BUDS.

POOR little Joanna, in consequence of Anita's revelations, began now to be possessed by a dire foreboding of trouble. She could not endure to have her sister out of her sight, and the espionage she exercised over her was a source of exquisite amusement to Anita, who was as gay as if she had

not a care in the world. Yet the charade-party had not lost all attractions for Joanna; she still looked forward to it eagerly, and was always ready to carry notes between Anita and Mrs. Carl Tomkins.

Nevertheless, as the happy time drew near, Joanna's vague anxiety about her sister increased, and, in addition to this, she was haunted by the presentiment, growing, perhaps, out of the very eagerness of anticipation, that she was never to wear the beautiful dress Lebrun sent home two days before the appointed evening. It hung in the large, old-fashioned wardrobe in the hall, and many times a day did Joanna go to inspect it, with a sad longing in her eyes.

"Joanna, I do wish you wouldn't look so," said Miss Basil, querulously, quite at a loss for an epithet. "I should like to see you take *some* satisfaction in the trouble your aunt has been at to please you." With all her insensibility to the vanities of dress, Miss Basil was not insensible to the praise Miss Hawkesby had bestowed upon Joanna's training, and she had a very natural anxiety to maintain the good impression her faithful care had made upon the discriminating old lady.

"Mela," said Joanna, with a caressing touch of the foam-like frills and flounces, "I know in my heart that I am not ungrateful; but *something* will happen, you'll see. I shall never wear this dress." It was now the morning of the day appointed for the charade-party.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Basil; "your system is out of order, Joanna; I knew just how it would be when you took to running about in this July sun. All the Griswolds are down with chills, and I do suspect that is what is the matter with you. Let me feel your nose, child."

"Oh, *please* don't, 'Mela,'" said Joanna, whose nose always indignantly resented this *onus probandi*. "I did but go three times with Anita's notes; and I'm just as well as ever I was in my life. But I have a *presentiment*. I suppose it's all a punishment for my devotion to the pomps and vanities, 'Mela, that I feel in my heart I shall never wear this dress."

"What is the matter with the dress, child?" said old Miss Hawkesby, coming into the hall just in time to hear this last sentence. "Doesn't it fit?"

"There is nothing in the world the matter with the dress, but I am sorry to say that Joanna is whimsical," said Miss Basil, in a deeply-injured tone.

"It is the way of girls," said Miss Hawkesby, imperturbably.

"Indeed, I am not whimsical, aunt," said Joanna; "and as to the dress, it is heavenly; but a fear possesses me that I shall never wear it. Do you not see that it is clouding up for a storm? The charade-party will have to be given up."

"Pooh! pooh!" said old Miss Hawkesby. "Middleborough is too desperately dull to submit to such a misfortune. Why, Anita is gone to the rehearsal, you know, in spite of the clouds. The storm will blow over, doubtless—"

"We are needing rain sadly, though," sighed Miss Basil, parenthetically.

"And if it should rain, other days will dawn. Depend upon it, Middleborough is not going to give up the charades. However, your dress does not suit me perfectly, Joanna; it needs something more; and if Mrs. Basil will allow me the carriage, I will drive in to Lebrun's, and buy some moss-rose-buds I was looking at. Your dress needs just that for finish."

If any thing could revive Joanna's drooping spirits, it was an announcement like this.

"I do believe it will blow over, 'Mela,'" said she, leaning out of the window to study the angry sky. "And I'll go this moment to ask the grandmamma about the carriage."

"But you are not to go into town, remember, Joanna; Miss Hawkesby will excuse you, I know. Your system is evidently disordered, and I can't have you run the risk of bringing on a bilious attack by any over-exertion. The party to-night will be more than enough for you in the present condition of your system—"

"Oh, never mind my system, Pamela!" cried Joanna, ungratefully. "I won't go into town, if you say not; but don't begin to talk about a bilious attack; you know I never did have one."

"I don't know," said Miss Basil; "depression of spirits is a pretty sure sign."

"But, indeed, my spirits are not depressed," said Joanna, as she ran downstairs to seek Mrs. Basil. "Nobody that expects to wear moss-rose-buds *can* be depressed in spirits."

Now, a rumor had reached Basilwood that morning that Mrs. Stargold was alarmingly ill, and, under the circumstances, Mrs. Basil felt it to be her duty to drive over and inquire about her cousin Elizabeth; and she very obligingly consented to go a little out of her way in order to leave Miss Hawkesby at Lebrun's, promising to send the carriage back for her. . . .

Joanna was not the only person that watched the clouds that morning, as may be readily inferred, considering how many were interested in the charade-party; but, without any special interest in charades, Mrs. Ruffner was anxious to persuade herself that the clouds did not portend rain.

"Jane," said she, after their late breakfast, "I begin to believe that it will not rain."

"It looks very threatening," said Miss Ruffner.

"Oh, looks are nothing, you know; and I don't believe that Cousin Elizabeth is so very ill; it's merely excitement. Those everlasting papers Mr. Redmond brought for her to look over, they just keep her in a constant fret about business."

"I think so myself," said Miss Ruffner, sourly. "It is all nerves with Cousin Elizabeth—but one dares not say so."

"Dr. Garnet says so," replied Mrs. Ruffner, with satisfaction.

"He should not be encouraged to express his opinion so freely," replied Miss Ruffner, quickly. "The best thing he could do for her would be to forbid positively all worry about business. She ought not even to see those papers, and, if I could have my way, she shouldn't."

"But you can't have your way," said Mrs. Ruffner, complacently; "so what is the use of fretting? You know Cousin Elizabeth won't say much about her way; but she is sure to have her way. I sha'n't worry; she'll do very well, now that she has had anodynes; and, as for me, I'm suffering for want of exercise. It's a fine cloudy morning for a walk, and I'll just run in to Lebrun's and exchange that belt-buckle, since you don't like it, and, if it should rain, just send the carriage for me."

When Miss Hawkesby arrived at Lebrun's, Mrs. Ruffner was in the back-room enjoying the only refreshment Middleborough afforded her. It was the work of but a few

moments to exchange the buckle with the obnoxious device of the Cupid and rose-bud for another with a pair of clasped hands figured thereon; but Mrs. Ruffner could always spare time to listen to those interesting items which Miss Crane detailed with that flavor of mystery so irresistible to a speculative mind, and Miss Crane, who loved an appreciative listener, could have talked by the hour, but that the claims of business forbade; and even the claims of business she had been known to neglect for the sake of gossip—conversation, she called it.

There was no one, therefore, to wait upon Miss Hawkesby, except the slow and awkward lass of fifteen whom all Middleborough agreed in condemning, and who now looked in vain from box to box for the moss-rose-buds, while Miss Crane, in the back-room, was telling to Mrs. Ruffner all that she knew, and a good deal that she did not know.

Old Miss Hawkesby, by no means the most amiable of women, lost her temper at last, and spoke her mind pretty freely about incompetent clerks; but, in the midst of her tirade, Mrs. Basil entered, and created a momentary diversion.

Mrs. Basil was in no good humor herself, as was evident from the emphasis with which she carried her ivory-headed staff.

"How did you find Mrs. Stargold?" asked Miss Hawkesby, turning her back upon the array of artificial flowers, among which not a rose-bud could be found.

"I did not see Mrs. Stargold," said Mrs. Basil, indignantly. "I rarely ever see her. I have good reason to suppose that she knows nothing of my attentions; but I am supported by a consciousness of having performed my duty. Still, it would have been a consolation, in this, my cousin's last illness—it would have been a great consolation to have had an interview with her."

"*Last illness!*" repeated Miss Hawkesby. "Oh, my dear madam, I don't believe any thing of the kind. Mrs. Stargold is not going to die yet, I hope! Why, she is only a year older than I am."—Then, turning suddenly upon the bewildered incompetent behind the counter, she said, fiercely: "*Will* you have the goodness to desire some one else to attend upon me?" Whereupon, the girl, poor thing, started into a sort of galvanized haste, opened the glass door leading into the back-room, whence issued these words:

"Depend upon it, ma'am, there is truth in this I tell you. All these years we've looked upon Miss Basil—yes, Sarah, in a moment; nobody of consequence *this* cloudy morning—but I always had my doubts of a woman that could not be persuaded into the fashion of the day.—Shut the door, will you, girl?—For all she's kept herself so secluded, the mystery will out, like a thunder-bolt, some day."

Mrs. Basil looked at Miss Hawkesby in helpless indignation, and Miss Hawkesby looked at her with an expression of haughty defiance; but neither said a word.

"Just excuse me, ma'am, one minute," said Miss Crane to Mrs. Ruffner; "Sarah never is any good behind the counter.—O ladies, good-morning!" to Mrs. Basil and Miss Hawkesby, turning a shade more yellow at sight of Mrs. Basil. "If Sarah had but *give* me a hint it was you, I'd not have kept you waiting; but it's Mrs. Ruffner in the next room, selecting of a belt-buckle, and so very choice she is! What can I do for you, ladies?"

"Those moss-rose-buds I laid aside here!" said Miss Hawkesby, aggressively.

"Sarah, you stupid!" exclaimed Miss Crane, sharply, "did I not show you where I put them—in this very drawer?—So sorry, ma'am, that you've been kept waiting. Here they are, ma'am; a dollar and a quarter a spray, and remarkably cheap. For a young lady's evening-dress, I think you said, ma'am? If I might suggest, it would require for the corsage, tunic, sleeves, and coiffure, just four of these elegant sprays, for five dollars—uncommonly reasonable." Miss Crane was in a fever of impatience to return to Mrs. Ruffner.

Miss Hawkesby, however, had no mercy upon her. She examined the roses critically, leaf by leaf; she asked for white muslin to display them on; she surveyed them deliberately at arm's length, scrutinized them closely again, and finally turned her back on them, saying, cruelly, to Mrs. Basil:

"I think Joanna would prefer those scarlet geraniums at Miss Green's."

Now Miss Green was a rival milliner, lately come to Middleborough, and already threatening Lebrun with total eclipse.

"Oh dear, ma'am!" cried Miss Crane, eagerly, "so far to go in this coming storm. I can show you some fuschias, the perfection of art. Moss-roses is common, I agree—"

But Miss Hawkesby was deaf, dumb, and

blind. She stalked to Mrs. Basil's carriage, looking as much like a fierce hussar as it was possible for a woman in a lace shawl to look; while Mrs. Basil followed behind, marking every step with her ivory-headed staff. They drove to Miss Green's, where Miss Hawkesby, without leaving the carriage, bought the scarlet geraniums, and then proclaimed herself ready to return to Basilwood.

"It is not to be borne!" at last Mrs. Basil exclaimed, when they had proceeded some distance on their way. Was it not intolerable that this wretched gossip about Miss Basil should come to Miss Hawkesby's ears just as the old lady seemed disposed to take an interest in Joanna? This thought kept Mrs. Basil long silent. Then it suddenly occurred to her that perhaps the hints they had just heard might inspire Miss Hawkesby with a laudable desire to rescue her forlorn little grandniece from the influence of a woman wrapped about in mystery. Apart from all anxiety in regard to Arthur, which, indeed, had given place now to a half-hope, half-fear that Anita would be his choice, she did really desire the good of her husband's granddaughter. Perplexed and distressed, she felt an unwonted craving for sympathy and counsel. She had been sorely tried that morning, and her self-reliance was giving way under repeated small trials, not the least of which was the irresistible conviction that old Miss Hawkesby, whom she had thought to manage and patronize, far surpassed her in worldly wisdom. But it is no rare inconsistency of human nature to turn for refuge in an emergency to some unwelcome conviction like this. Poverty of resource has made many a desperate woman resign her pride; and with the hope that Miss Hawkesby might relieve her perplexity, Mrs. Basil uttered her protest, with a latent consciousness that it was, in reality, an appeal to Miss Hawkesby's superior tact and judgment. "It is not to be borne!" said she, vehemently.

"I waited for you to speak, madam," said Miss Hawkesby, with a formal bow, expressive of her relief at being freed from the restraint of silence. "It concerns you so much more nearly than it does myself. But I quite agree with you—it is not to be borne."

"I allude to this gossip," said Mrs. Basil, whose usual cold composure was rapidly

forsaking her. "Could any thing be more mortifying to a woman in my position? Miss Basil's connection with me; and Mrs. Ruffner, the widow of Charles Samuel Ruffner, stooping—"

"Why, my good madam," said Miss Hawkesby, "we must take the world as we find it; and gossip is Mrs. Ruffner's propensity; what else can you expect of her?"

"I own," said Mrs. Basil, with a sort of peevish triumph that contradicted her words, "I did expect that a decent respect for our cousin, Mrs. Stargold, would have kept her at home in the present alarming condition of Mrs. Stargold's health."

"Now, I don't believe a word of that," said old Miss Hawkesby, quickly. "Beggings your pardon, madam, Elizabeth Stargold is no more going to die than I am. There is but a year between us, and she has a constitution of iron. I know, for I went to school with her. She's had a shock, and the Ruffners are doing all they can to foster that shock into something serious. She's had a shock, and she's taken it morbidly; but she'll get over it. *That* doesn't trouble me. I'm much more deeply concerned about this talk in regard to our excellent Miss Basil. It is not altogether new to me; and I'm afraid there is some foundation for all this gossip."

"Pamela shall deceive me no longer!" cried Mrs. Basil, shrilly, beginning to lose control of herself as the suspicion dawned upon her that old Miss Hawkesby was about to espouse Pamela's cause. "I have been harassed too much already by hints of this nature. I shall see her when I arrive at home, and DEMAND an explanation!"

"I think you are right, madam," said Miss Hawkesby, with judicial calm. "I've no doubt Miss Basil can explain satisfactorily. I came here with a prejudice against that excellent woman. I'm rather apt to take up prejudices, but I can lay them down again, thank Heaven! And Miss Basil has disarmed me completely. I've acquired a great respect for her; and I am much pleased with Joanna, highly pleased with her, though I had not expected to be. Miss Basil has evidently spared no pains with the child, and she deserves great credit for that."

"My husband's granddaughter—" said Mrs. Basil, tremulously—and there she stopped. Her thoughts were in painful con-

fusion, and she knew not what she would say.

"Oh, we'll sift this gossip to the bottom," said Miss Hawkesby, with decision. "I believe nothing against Miss Basil until I hear her story; and I know that she has too much good sense to persist in a mystery, in the face of all this talk."

"Pamela is very secret," sighed Mrs. Basil. "I've never yet dared to approach her on the subject, much as it has harassed me."

"Oh, indeed? But I shall dare," said old Miss Hawkesby.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BEYOND HOPE.

THE first gusty drops of the impending storm were beginning to fall when the two ladies alighted at Basilwood, bent upon an instant interview with Miss Basil. But only Joanna was at home, watching the clouds with despair in her heart. Anita had not yet returned from the rehearsal, and Miss Basil had gone to the Griswolds with medicines. Mrs. Basil and Miss Hawkesby, therefore, retired, each to her own room, to ponder in private the best method of approaching the reticent Miss Basil on the subject of those mysterious hints they had that morning overheard; and poor little Joanna was again alone, speculating despondingly upon the prospect of a disappointment, and wondering uneasily why Anita staid away so long. The sight of the scarlet geraniums served but to aggravate her despair, for already the rain was dropping, slowly and fitfully, indeed, but with the unmistakable promise of ultimately "pouring in torrents."

Late in the afternoon, Anita returned; very pale and tired she looked, as Joanna saw at once.

"O Anita!" she cried, "you have worn yourself out! I thought you were never coming back. Is it going to rain very, very hard?"

"My poor little Joanna," said Anita, taking her sister's face between her hands, "would it be so great a disappointment to miss this tiresome charade-party?"

"It is tiresome to you, Anita, because you have worked so over it. How hot your hands are! Lie down and rest, or you will not

be able to go. And I have scarlet geraniums, Anita; isn't Aunt Hawkesby kind to me?" And Joanna held up the box containing the flowers, for Anita's inspection.

Anita looked at them, smiling absently; then, turning away abruptly, she began to move restlessly about the room.

"Are you displeased, Anita? Is any thing the matter? Has any one vexed you?" asked Joanna, anxiously.

"I'm rehearsing my part, child," said Anita, with a mock-tragedy air.

"But you will be worn out; you never will be able to go, if you do not rest? And I can't go without you," said Joanna, pleadingly.

"I am very sorry for you, Joanna," said Anita, gently, "but the charades cannot take place to-night. You see there is going to be a storm. Never mind, Joanna, you shall have plenty of opportunities in the future."

"I knew it would be so," said Joanna, resignedly, after a short silence of blank disappointment. "And my dress was so pretty, and the scarlet geraniums and all, and you would have made me look so nice." Anita turned her face away. "But, never mind," continued Joanna, cheerfully; "you will yet dress me up in my pretty dress—will you not, Anita?" But, to her consternation, her sister answered by a sob. "O Anita! what has happened, what is going to happen?" cried Joanna, in terror, running up to her.

"Child," said Anita, falteringly, "if I were to go away and never see you more—"

"You must not go, you shall not go!" cried Joanna, clinging to her sister in terror. "Anita! Anita! what are you going to do? Is it Mr. Redmond? I will tell Pamela—I will tell my aunt!"

"No, Joanna; for you will not betray me," said Anita, quietly. "It is easy enough to go to Aunt Hawkesby's room and tell her that I am going away forever this night. She will tie her head up in her silk handkerchief and upbraid me, but she can't prevent my going; and, when I am gone, you will win great favor in her sight by having betrayed the unworthy trust of your undutiful sister; but, whether you betray me, or whether you do not betray me, you will see me no more after this night, my little sister. Our aunt, Miss Hawkesby, will immediately exact a promise of you, and duty, honor, gratitude,

all will bind you to keep it religiously—never, never to see me again."

Poor Joanna, trembling violently, and with tears streaming down her face, threw herself on her knees at her sister's feet.

"I cannot betray you! No, no! No matter what it might cost me, I cannot betray you. But I can plead with you. Anita, I would risk my life for you! I would give my life for you! Mr. Redmond is wrong—"

"Hush, Joanna; he loves me," said Anita, in a low voice.

"He cannot love you as I love you!" cried Joanna, passionately.

"You know nothing about it, child," said Anita; but she smiled.

"I know my own heart," cried Joanna, "and I would give my life for you, Anita. Don't go away this night. Aunt Hawkesby, she is old—she has had you from a little child, Anita—I couldn't leave Pamela this way. And we have just found each other; must we lose each other so soon—so soon? Anita, be pitiful; there are but us two."

"It is too late, Joanna, it is too late," said Anita, turning her face away.

"No, it is not too late, even at the last moment," said Joanna.

"I cannot let him come for me and then refuse to go with him," said Anita. "I cannot do that. Have you no thought for him?"

"Anita," said Joanna, coloring deeply, and avoiding her sister's eyes, "if you love each other, time will make it all right; you are neither of you old, and Aunt Hawkesby is. And people ought not to be married this way; they ought to be married properly at home."

"Time and youth against Aunt Hawkesby!" said Anita, bitterly. "It is too late!"

"Anita, you say that if you go away I shall see you no more—how can I bear that? Write and tell him not to come—at least not now. Write, and I will carry the note." Joanna had risen. "Write, write, Anita, and you will never be sorry for it. It is best to do right."

"My dear, good Joanna," said Anita, slowly, "give me the paper; I will write. I said I would never sacrifice myself for you—did I not? Yet see what I am doing! Well may Basil Redmond say that you are his rival."

"You are doing right," said Joanna, "and all will be well. You shall be happy,

too, Anita; Aunt Hawkesby has a heart, and I will prove it to you."

"But it rains," said Anita, anxiously, seeing that Joanna began to array herself in water-proof and over-shoes. "Why not send old Thurston?"

"No, no; I myself will take it; did I not say that I would risk my life for you? Old Thurston would sell his soul for gold, but he couldn't be hired to risk his 'jints' in this weather."

"But it is over the bridge and into the town that you must go," said Anita, "to Aurelia Caruthers. She will be the surest to see him—she was to have come over with him."

"Very well, I can take it," said Joanna, eagerly, as she pinned the note inside the pocket of her water-proof. If only she could get away safely with it! Pamela had laid an injunction upon her not to go out—but that was in consideration of the charade-party—and, while so much was at stake, a trifling disobedience could not matter. "Now, Anita, won't you lie down and go to sleep? I will not be gone very long."

So Anita promised, and Joanna set forth upon her errand.

It was not raining very hard when she left Basilwood, but by the time she had arrived at the bridge the storm had burst in all its fury. The narrow river, subject to sudden and violent freshets, was seething and whirling madly in its course; but Joanna did not dream of danger, though the bridge rocked with every blast; her only anxiety was to perform her errand. The bridge being covered, she did not feel the full severity of the storm while under its shelter, where all was dark, save when a flash of lightning illumined the obscurity. About midway she ran against two persons, a man and a woman, crossing in the opposite direction. They, like herself, were enveloped in water-proof, and evidently in as great haste as she. The collision caused an appreciable delay of an instant, and in that instant a fearful creaking and swaying of the timbers warned the three to hasten for their lives.

"Merciful Heaven!" shrieked the woman, "we are lost!"

The man, seizing his companion by the arm, shouted the single word "Run!"

And Joanna obeyed, as though upheld by superhuman strength, half giddy with the peril of the situation, and almost overpow-

ered by the tremendous rush of recollections that crowded to her mind. She gave herself up for lost, and strove to frame a prayer. But Heaven willed it otherwise, and Joanna's feet touched the land in safety. Then, with a thankful heart, she looked back, and saw, on the opposite bank, the man and the woman whom she had met in crossing standing safe. She knew not who they were, but a common peril had made them seem inexpressibly near to her; and they, probably, had the same feeling toward her, for the man was waving his hat to her. And the crazy old bridge still kept its place! Doubtless it would stand forever, Joanna thought; and in a little while she would have seen Miss Caruthers, delivered her note, and be on her way back again to Anita; and so, hastening on, she presently arrived at her destination.

The house in which Mrs. Paul Caruthers then lived was built in the early days of Middleborough. Everybody knows the diminutive, two-story frame building, standing on a corner fronting the west; its walls are a dingy white, its Venetian blinds a dingy green. Two uncommonly tall crape-myrtles guard the gate, like a pair of plumed grenadiers; two huge Cape jasmine-bushes, the rotund growth of many years, obscure the narrow windows on either side of the contracted porch, to which a bricked walk leads the way. A brown and yellow door, blistered by the sunsets of many a summer, invites you, by a deeply-indented brass knocker, to make your coming known.

Joanna's impatient summons was answered by Mrs. Paul Caruthers in person.

"Why, bless me!" cried the old lady, staring, "I surely thought it *was* the doctor. I've been threatened again with that vertigo, and I sent for Dr. Garnet, above three hours ago. I surely thought, when you knocked, that it was he. Well, come in, child; I know you, but I can't recall your name."

Joanna, in high excitement with her walk, her temporary fright, and her eagerness to perform her errand and return, shouted her name in the old lady's ear.

"There!" cried Mrs. Caruthers, crossly, and recalling a step. "I'm not so deaf as all that. Come in. What on earth brought you out in this storm? I'll engage Miss Basil doesn't know it."

Joanna, ignoring this last remark, en-

deavored to make Mrs. Caruthers understand that she wished to see Miss Aurelia.

"You must take off this cloak," said the old lady, for answer; "I can't have it dripping on my carpet, you see."

Joanna, in a fever of impatience, slipped off her cloak, repeating her demand to see Miss Aurelia.

"Sit down," said Mrs. Paul Caruthers, pushing her into the little parlor, and then into a little chair. "What on earth do you want with Aurelia?"

"I've a message for her!" shouted Joanna. "And I'm in haste!"

"Bless me! I'm not so very deaf, surely. I wonder you do not remember," said the old lady, with indignant reproach. "A note or a message from Miss Anita, I suppose?"

"Oh, please, can I see her?" entreated Joanna.

"What? See Aurelia? Why, didn't I tell you that she is gone? She went half an hour ago, across the bridge to Upper Middleborough. I shouldn't wonder if you met her. She was with Mr. Redmond."

Joanna started up with a cry of dismay. Surely, she had met them on the bridge; why had she not thought of it? If she could only get back to Anita in time!

"You are not going back to-night, surely?" said Mrs. Caruthers.

"Oh, I must! I must!" she cried, rushing into the little entry, where, to her inexpressible indignation, Dr. Garnet caught her in his arms, just as he was coming in.

"Hey-dey!" he cried, in his bluff way. "How the mischief did you get *here*? By boat?"

"You know very well that I did not come that way," said matter-of-fact Miss Joanna, indignantly. "Let me go! I am going home. I tell you there is not a moment to lose."

"Home to Basilwood?" said Dr. Garnet, loudly, and little knowing the misery he was about to inflict. "Why, you can't get there. The bridge is gone; utterly and irremediably gone; I saw it with my own eyes."

Joanna stared at him wildly, and then, realizing that she was cut off from home, staggered back against the wall, white as a sheet.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Garnet.

"You are not going to faint? Why, there was nobody hurt, you sensitive-plant! See what it is, now, to be a woman, and have nerves."

"I'm not a woman, and I've got no nerves!" cried Joanna, with rampant antagonism. "But I'm a miserable, unfortunate girl!—O Pamela! Pamela! why did I disobey you? Had I staid at home, as you bade me, all might yet be well.—It will break my heart, Anita!"

"I can't make out one word she says!" cried old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, indignantly. "What is it all about?"

"I'm blessed if I know," said the doctor, helplessly.

"You do know!" cried Joanna, passionately. "The bridge is gone, and all my hopes blasted!"

Dr. Garnet laughed.

Mrs. Caruthers uttered a little scream.

"The bridge gone? I trust Aurelia was not on it," said she, with a voice and look of terror.

"No, no; she is safe enough, *on the other side*," said Joanna, bitterly.

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated Mrs. Caruthers. "And Middleborough bridge is gone?"

"It is gone!" wailed Joanna. "And I am caught here, just like a mouse in a trap. And nobody feels for me," she added, bitterly, as Dr. Garnet laughed again.

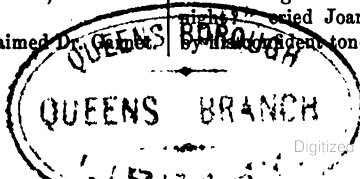
"Poor thing! I'm afraid she's very young," said old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, shaking her head compassionately. "Do, doctor, give her a little valerian."

"Valerian!" cried Joanna, with a hysterical laugh. "*Valerian!* All the old women in the world believe in valerian. Will it take me back to Basilwood?"

"Mercy upon us!" cried Mrs. Caruthers, lifting a pair of trembling hands; "the girl's intellects are scattering, surely. And it is enough to unsettle one, I say. Middleborough bridge is gone? Well, I wonder! It has stood for twenty years or more. I always said it would last my time, and I suppose I shall go next."

"Not a bit of it, madam!" said Dr. Garnet, with loud assurance. "We'll build up the bridge, and you too."

"And get me back to Basilwood this night!" cried Joanna, eagerly, encouraged by his bold tone.



"Excuse me there, if you please," said Dr. Garnet. "I don't undertake to perform impossibilities; and you *can't* get back."

"Not by boat?"

"Certainly not."

"Am I to stay here *forever*?" cried she then, with shrill emphasis, and wringing her hands.

"The Lord forbid!" said old Mrs. Caruthers, devoutly.

"Now see here," said Dr. Garnet, "you just make yourself easy. You are safe here, and all in good time you'll get back to Basilwood."

"All in good time! Oh, you know nothing about it!" cried Joanna, with a passionate burst of tears. "I shall never see my sister again."

"I think you would better look at her tongue, doctor—and feel her pulse," said Mrs. Caruthers. "I'm not so sure but that a good dose of valerian—this breaking down of Middleborough bridge is a terrible shock—the instability of mundane affairs, to be sure!"

"My head does ache," said poor Joanna, helplessly, to the doctor. "Am I going to be ill? Pamela said so this morning."

"Ill? Not a bit of it!" said the doctor, encouragingly. "Only a little nervous excitement. I'll give you a dose of chloral; that will quiet you. Then do you lie down and take it easy—not my physic, but this mouse-trap business, ha! ha! We'll get you back to Basilwood all in good time—all in good time."

"It is too late," sighed Joanna, as she swallowed the doctor's dose. "When I get back to Basilwood all will be over.—O Anita! Anita! Every thing will be changed."

"You may lie down in here," said Mrs. Caruthers, opening a door into the adjoining room, with an air of heaping coals of fire upon her enemy's head. "It is Aurelia's own room, and not a bad place to be caught in, I'm sure," she added, with resentful reference to Joanna's unfortunate speech about the mouse-trap, which the old lady misunderstood. Ever afterward she asserted that Joanna had spoken it in contempt of the dingy little house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHERE IS JOANNA?

Poor Joanna lay down upon Miss Caruthers's bed, and succumbed to the dose of chloral, vaguely conscious, ere she fell asleep, that Dr. Garnet, whose every word penetrated the crack of the door, was talking loudly to old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, and that he was talking about Miss Basil.

"News, ma'am? Why, yes, indeed, ma'am, the most astonishing. Middleborough will wake up to a sensation to-morrow, or I'm much mistaken. And who, now, do you think is going to astonish the natives this time?"

"Mrs. Stargold isn't dying, is she?" asked Mrs. Caruthers. "You say you came from her house."

"No; nor likely to die, bless you! I knew all the time that it was only worry of mind. It's that unaccountably queer cousin of old Judge Basil's, ma'am, that I've always associated in my mind with flannel and 'yarb-tea.' Why, bless you, her story is a perfect romance!"

"I've often heard she wasn't so reticent for nothing," said old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, sagely. "But speak up, speak up, doctor, do, or I can't understand you."

"Reticent for nothing!" shouted the doctor. "Well, no, I should say not, most decidedly. Who, now, do you suppose she turns out to be after burying herself all these years at Basilwood?"

At the mention of Basilwood, Joanna, in spite of indignation, in spite of anxiety, was unable longer to fix her attention beyond dreamily speculating upon what Anita might at that moment be doing; and, before she knew it, was in a profound slumber.

Anita was at that moment surprised by the entrance of Miss Caruthers, who had arrived alone during the raging of the storm; but exposure to the weather had not subdued her, by any means. She was in a state of excitement that fitted her for any arduous undertaking, so she said.

Anita, starting up, looked at her in consternation; but, before she could give expression to her thought, Miss Caruthers exclaimed, gayly:

"Henceforth name me the Indomitable! You may well look surprised to see me. Such

a storm as we came through! But don't look so alarmed, my dear; it's all right, only we are under the necessity of changing the programme slightly."

"Joanna! Where is Joanna?" cried Anita, nervously.

"Preserve us!" ejaculated Miss Caruthers. "She isn't in hearing, is she?"

"Then you haven't seen her?" said Anita, falling back upon the pillows.

"Seen her! No," answered Miss Caruthers, rather bewildered. "Why, you are as nervous—come, come, this will never do! I tell you, it is all right. Not a soul knows of it, and the carriage will be here at eight o'clock. I do not know what new arrangement Mr. Redmond will make, under the circumstances, but you may count upon his being punctual" (laughing); "he hurried me away in spite of the storm; and it was well he did, or there would have been an end of every thing; for Middleborough bridge is gone!"

"Gone!" cried Anita, starting up with a scream and wringing her hands. "What, then, has become of Joanna?"

"For Heaven's sake, what has Joanna to do with it?" said Miss Caruthers, rather impatiently.

"She has every thing to do with it!" cried Anita, wringing her hands in an agony of terror and grief. "I sent her to you to tell you not to come. I have changed my mind. I will not go. Oh, how could I risk the child's life in such a storm as this!"

"Well," said Miss Caruthers, coolly, "Mr. Redmond said that was Joanna on the bridge."

Anita caught at a chair, and saved herself from falling.

"Why do you torture me?" she said, faintly. "Tell me at once that Joanna went down with the bridge."

"Now, you dear creature," cried Miss Caruthers, running toward her with the cologne-bottle, "you torture yourself. Joanna did not go down with the bridge, I'm sure. We met her just half-way, in crossing, and we saw her safe on the other side, after we were safe on this side. It was so dark, we shouldn't have known our own grandmothers had we run against them. The old bridge focked so, we thought we were gone, and we ran for dear life. And, sure enough, we hadn't come as far as Chancellor Page's be-

fore little Harry Jordane overtook us and told us that the bridge was blown away. Aunt made a great fuss about my coming out in the storm; but I was just wild about the success of our scheme. Now, don't give way, just when success is within your grasp."

"But Joanna—" Anita urged, anxiously, pushing away Miss Caruthers's hands; "what if she should have attempted to come back over that bridge?"

"My dearest creature, calm yourself. Joanna is safe, you may be sure. She must have arrived at my aunt's before the bridge went down; and, since she cannot get back, of course she'll stay there all night."

"What will my aunt say? What will Miss Basil say? I deserve their deepest condemnation," said Anita, despairingly.

"As for Miss Hawkesby, she needn't know it until to-morrow; and then what matter what she says? And Miss Basil is away for the night, with some sick person or other; Mr. Redmond himself told me so. There! what bell is that?"

"It is for dinner," said Anita, faintly. "I cannot, cannot go down."

"Oh, but you must, you must!" cried Miss Caruthers, peremptorily. "We can't have Miss Hawkesby coming up here making inquiries, you know. Bathe your face in cologne; drink some of it. Heavens, how pale you are! Pinch some color into your cheeks, for pity's sake, and remember to eat with appetite and talk with ease."

Anita, recognizing the wisdom of this advice, roused herself with an effort, and followed Miss Caruthers's direction. She appeared to eat with appetite; and fortunately there was little need for her to speak, as Miss Hawkesby was in a talkative mood, and left few pauses that Mrs. Basil or Miss Caruthers could not fill.

"So Miss Basil is not come home yet?" said Miss Hawkesby. "I wonder what keeps her?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Basil, in an injured tone, "they tell me that one of the Griswolds is at the point of death, and Pamela *will* stay, under those circumstances, until the last gasp."

"Well, well, we'll make a very pleasant party without her. Miss Basil never contributes much to conversation; and here we have Miss Caruthers to fill her place. Miss

Caruthers always has plenty to say. She will give us an account of all the little spites and jealousies Mrs. Carl Tomkins has been so busy soothing and conciliating this past week—to my mind the most amusing feature of charades, tableaux, concerts, and all amateur performances. And so the storm puts an end to it all? Joanna—but where is Joanna?"

Anita gave a gasp that had nearly betrayed her; but, fortunately, Mrs. Basil interposed in time.

"Oh, Joanna, in all probability, has become uneasy about Miss Basil, and started out to find her."

"*In this storm?*" cried Miss Hawkesby, with a horrified expression.

"Do let me help you to some of this pickle," said Miss Caruthers, hastily, to Anita.—"My dear Miss Hawkesby, the storm is not so severe as you think; I came out in it."

"Then you did a very unbecoming thing, allow me to tell you," said Miss Hawkesby, severely. She didn't like Miss Caruthers, and she would not hesitate to express her mind, with or without permission. "I've lived long enough in this world to learn that only a very excellent woman like Miss Basil can defy a storm like this with any propriety."

"Thurston saw Joanna go out, more than an hour ago," said Mrs. Basil, querulously. "I don't approve, but I am not responsible for Joanna's conduct. She is my husband's granddaughter; I never forget that; but I've no authority over her. If I had—" and Mrs. Basil's head and hands began shaking strangely.

"Oh, we always believe in our own infallibility," said Miss Hawkesby, coolly, "until we've had some experience. But as to authority, I shall let Miss Joanna know that I have some jurisdiction over her. No young lady belonging to me shall go out in such weather without knowing my mind on the subject."

"No, aunt," said Anita, with a firmness that surprised and encouraged Miss Caruthers, "you will not scold Joanna; she is not to blame for—for doing what she thinks is right."

"Don't dictate to me," said Miss Hawkesby, shortly. "You know, Miss Anita, that you yourself deserve my displeasure in some things."

Miss Caruthers changed color, but Anita looked charmingly serene. She knew very well that her aunt alluded to a great battle they had fought the day before about the gentleman Anita called "the venerable Mr. Merwin." It was that battle that had decided Anita to run off with Basil Redmond.

But Anita's serenity forsook her the moment she was up-stairs again, alone with Miss Caruthers. "I must have my sister back again!" she cried, passionately. "I cannot endure this suspense. My poor little sister, she said she would risk her life for me; has Heaven, then, taken her at her word?"

Anita began walking the floor in uncontrollable agony of mind. In vain Miss Caruthers essayed to calm her.

"My dear creature, you will exhaust yourself. Do lie down and rest. Be persuaded that Joanna is perfectly safe. Remember that Mr. Redmond will be at the lower gate with the carriage by eight o'clock. It never would do to disappoint him."

"I will not see him! I will not go!" cried Anita, passionately. "I wish I never, never had consented!"

"Upon my word," said Miss Caruthers, beginning to lose her temper, "these are great thanks to me! All because that flighty Joanna must go posting off in the storm! Come, now, my dear," added she, coaxingly, "think of Mr. Redmond."

"If I have not Joanna safe again, I can never see him. I tell you I will not go with him," said Anita. "Don't you understand my misery? It was I that sent the child out in this pitiless storm, to tell you not to come—to put a stop at once to this unseemly business."

"You don't mean to say that you've changed your mind?" Miss Caruthers asked, staring in blank amazement.

"I do mean to say just that," answered Anita. "I will not go. I was in a rage with my aunt, or I never should have consented. I was mad ever to confide in you."

"Thank you—thank you!" said Miss Caruthers, angrily. "I am infinitely obliged!"

"Forgive me," said Anita, with hysterical laughter. "Perhaps I am mad now."

"You are overwrought," said Miss Caruthers, relenting. She had her own little spite against Miss Hawkesby, and she was

loath to give up so fine an opportunity of gratifying it, to say nothing of the distinction of assisting in a runaway match. "Why, I thought you had more nerve, you poor dear; now you shall lie down and rest, and, when eight o'clock comes, all will be right."

"I will not go!" said Anita. "Do you think I draw back because I am afraid? I will not do it, because it is wrong—Joanna has made me feel that it is wrong."

"You surely never told that little fool? Then you were mad indeed!" cried Miss Caruthers, furiously. So she was to be balked of her revenge for Miss Hawkesby's slighting speeches, by that child Joanna.

"She is my sister, please to remember," said Anita, in her cool, soft way. The prospect of measuring swords with this girl, whom she knew she could excel in the art of fence, had a tonic effect upon her excited nerves.

"I suppose it was natural," said Miss Caruthers, recovering herself, and unwilling to resign the hope of ultimately carrying her point. She felt encouraged by Anita's calmer tone; and, remembering with satisfaction the serene firmness with which Anita had opposed, at dinner, her aunt's determination to scold Joanna, she assured herself that there was a fund of strength, after all, behind this intense excitement. "It was natural; you wished, of course, to take leave of your sister; and happily she is now out of the way of trouble—and safe, be sure of that—oh, be sure of that," she reiterated, eagerly, for Anita was becoming excited again.

Poor Anita!—the words "out of the way of trouble—and safe," had for her disturbed mind a ghastly significance, reminding her of those prudent phrases by which the dread announcement of a death is evaded. She began to moan and wring her hands.

Miss Caruthers, mentally anathematizing Joanna, strove to turn Anita's thoughts into another channel by talking of Basil Redmond. But in vain she dwelt upon his devotion, in vain she painted his despair and disappointment; Anita, when she said any thing at all, said only:

"I will not see him; I will not go with him."

"Well, it is very nearly eight o'clock," at last said Miss Caruthers, with a sigh in acknowledgment of her defeat; "I may as well go down and tell him to give it up."

Then, to her surprise and joy, Anita started up.

"I will see him!" she cried. "I will go down with you."

"If once she sees Basil Redmond, she must go with him," Miss Caruthers thought; but she did not know Anita; she did not understand the loathing of self that made the girl shudder as they stole down the back-stairs; she thought she was a support, morally and physically, to this slight, trembling creature whose arm she held, and into whose ear she kept repeating words of good cheer and encouragement, to which Anita deigned no reply.

The fury of the storm had abated somewhat, but the rain was still falling heavily, and it was so dark that when they arrived at the gate they would not have known the carriage was there had they not run against Basil Redmond in the walk.

"Anita!" he cried, joyfully. "You will not disappoint me?"

He attempted to take her hands; but Anita drew back.

"I have come to tell you that I cannot go with you," she said, gently.

"Anita!" he cried, in consternation. "What does this mean?"

"She has been talking that way this entire evening," said Miss Caruthers, volubly. "Don't listen to her." And she attempted to urge the two forward.

Anita resisted.

"I cannot go with you," she repeated. "Don't reproach me; I am miserable and unhappy enough. I tried to send you word not to come; I have risked my sister's life in this storm, and I know not what is become of her."

Her voice rose in a wail of anguish.

"I never heard the like!" exclaimed Miss Caruthers, impatiently. "I tell you she is safe enough."

"Oh, yes, Anita," said Redmond; "you distress yourself for nothing. Joanna is safe enough."

"I cannot go away with you," Anita persisted. "I cannot do this underhand thing; I cannot let you do it. It is unworthy of you and of me. If you knew how degraded I felt as I crept down those stairs—"

"But, Anita—"

"I tell you I cannot, I will not go with you while I am uncertain about my sister's

fate. But bring her back to me—oh ! if, indeed, you love me, bring her back to me, and I promise you devoutly I will brave my aunt's displeasure openly for your sake."

It was vain to argue with her. To Miss Caruthers she was coolly obstinate; but Redmond she resisted with such passionate pleading that at last he said :

"She will make herself ill; we must carry her back to the house."

It was carrying her indeed; for, when she found she had gained her point, she trembled so she could not walk.

"My poor Anita," said Redmond, "promise me, promise me that you will cease to distress yourself, that you will believe in Joanna's safety."

"I promise, oh, I promise!" said Anita, hysterically; and then, as they had arrived at the house, she signed to Miss Caruthers to go in first. When she was alone with Redmond, she turned to him and said, with something of that mocking air peculiar to her :

"Is it not a bitter thing to have confided in that girl?"

"Nothing is bitter, Anita, that gives you to me," said Redmond, sadly.

"Ah, yes, any thing wrong would come to be bitter to us in time," said Anita. "The dear, the good little Joanna taught me this when she made me see the folly of running away to be married. She thinks people should be married respectably at home. Poor little Joanna!" And then Anita burst into bitter weeping.

"I see," said Redmond, "Joanna is dearer than I," and he sighed bitterly.

"Ah, no ! no !" said Anita, as she clung to him. "Ah, you do not know what a struggle I have been through. Bid me good-night, but not farewell, or my heart must break."

Redmond's indignation melted at this. He bade her good-night with many assurances that Joanna must be safe, that he himself would bring her back, and that all would yet be well; and Anita went up-stairs comforted somewhat.

"Well!" said Miss Caruthers, "what kind of a girl are you? I've a great mind to quarrel with you."

Anita almost wished that she would; she was beginning to find this ready friend detestable.

"I am this kind of a girl," she said,

"that when I make up my mind to a thing I cannot be moved."

"By anybody except Joanna," amended Miss Caruthers, with a sneer.

"Not even by Joanna," said Anita, coolly. "It wasn't my mind, but only my temper, that was made up to this step, because I was in a fury with my aunt. Now let me tell you something for your future guidance: never have any thing to do with a runaway match; it's a very ridiculous position to occupy, that of defeated confidante; never receive confidences, they are mortally troublesome, whether you keep them or whether you betray them; and perhaps I ought to tell you finally that you'd better not have any thing further to do with me, as I am sure to incur my aunt's displeasure."

It wasn't nice in Anita to say all this, considering the service Miss Caruthers had been so willing to render her; but Miss Caruthers received it with an amiable giggle.

"You *are* so funny," she said; but, indeed, she hadn't the independence to quarrel with Anita.

Then Miss Hawkesby came in, and turned the conversation.

"Anita," she said, sharply, "what are you doing shut up here all the evening? You might bring your company down-stairs and entertain us. Mrs. Basil and I have been dull enough, and now she's gone to bed."

"I am sick, aunt," said Anita, and burst into tears, sobbing violently.

"Why, bless my soul!" cried Miss Hawkesby, in astonishment. "Why, Anita, this isn't *your* way.—What have you been saying to her? What have you been doing to her?" she said, turning fiercely to Miss Caruthers.

"I, ma'am?" said Miss Caruthers, stiffening. "I'm the best friend she has; I defy her to deny it."

"Where is Miss Basil? She understands physic, and all that," said Miss Hawkesby, running around the room in a frightened way. "Hasn't Miss Basil come home yet?"

"No, she hasn't," said Anita, between her sobs; and then, with a wail that terrified her aunt almost into spasms, "nor Joanna, either."

"Anita, Anita, for mercy's sake," said Miss Hawkesby, tremulously, "compose yourself! She's with Miss Basil, you know.—It's nerves, poor thing!" she added, turning

appealingly to Miss Caruthers. "Get me a glass of water for her, my dear.—Now you go to bed and calm yourself, Anita.—We had a quarrel yesterday, but I'm sorry for it. Never mind, we'll make it all up."

And so, coaxing and caressing, she undressed Anita and put her to bed as if she had been a baby.

"She's a good girl, Anita is," she whispered, apologetically, to Miss Caruthers, laying aside, for the nonce, all prejudice. "She doesn't often act in this way; if she did, she'd rule me with a rod of iron. But I wish that Basil Redmond was hanged."

"Go to bed, aunt," said Anita, feebly. "I would much rather have Miss Caruthers with me; you know you snore."

"Yes, my darling, I know I do," said old Miss Hawkesby, pathetically. "I'll just leave my door open, and Miss Caruthers shall call me if you need any thing."

But, long before Miss Hawkesby was awake next morning, Anita was up and gone, and Miss Caruthers with her.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHAT WILL MISS HAWKESBY SAY?

WHEN Joanna awoke the next morning her limbs felt stiff, her head confused; she knew not where she was, she could not remember what had happened; but gradually, as her eyes wandered around the unfamiliar room, recollection returned; the dread certainty that Anita was gone renewed her anguish, and, with a cry of despair, she rose from the bed. She had not undressed, and she did not care—or, rather, she did not think—to stay to arrange her toilet. Her one object now was to see her aunt, to confess every thing, and to plead for her sister. There was comfort in the thought that she herself could not appear entirely blameless in Miss Hawkesby's eyes: might not her aunt, therefore, be the more easily won to forgive Anita? This was rather an instinct than an argument with Joanna, but her faith therein was strong, and she was eager to act upon it without delay. Utterly regardless of the claims of hospitality, she was about to leave the house, when she encountered Miss Caruthers coming in.

The two looked at each other with no

friendly regard. Joanna, though she had lived apart from the Middleborough world, was not ignorant that the public voice pronounced Miss Caruthers "fast;" and she bitterly resented this enterprising young lady's influence over Anita.

"You evil genius!" she cried, with fierce denunciation. "Away with you! Out of my sight! I never wish to see you again!"

"So!" said Miss Caruthers, with a withering sneer. "You are safe enough. Oh, I made sure of it; naught's never in danger. A pretty mess you've made, meddling in this business. Why couldn't you stay quietly at home, and hold your tongue, as becomes a child? Then all would have been well; as it is, you may thank yourself."

This was a bitter reproach to poor Joanna, who had persuaded herself that had she remained at home she might have prevailed with Anita against Miss Caruthers and Basil Redmond combined; and, inasmuch as she had disobeyed Pamela's injunction, it was an added bitterness to feel that the reproach was deserved; but this feeling did not soften her heart toward Miss Caruthers.

"If you had staid at home, where you belong, you might justly censure me," she said, hoarsely. "Where is my sister?"

"You go find her," said Miss Caruthers, contemptuously, drawing her skirts around her as if to avoid contamination. "May Heaven preserve me from such a termagant spirit!"

But to this Joanna made no reply. She had resolved that she would never speak to Miss Caruthers again, and the moment her passage was clear she rushed like a whirlwind out of the door.

"What on earth is all this fuss about?" cried old Mrs. Paul Caruthers, peering over the baluster in her nightcap and flowered dressing-gown. "Upon my word, it is enough to raise the dead!"

"Only that child Joanna, ma'am," replied Miss Caruthers. "She won't stay to breakfast."

"Let her go! A good riddance!" said old Mrs. Paul Caruthers. "She scorned the house that gave her shelter last night; she'd only scorn our humble board this morning. How did you get back? They told me, last night, the bridge gave way. In a skiff, eh? Well, I'm glad you're safe. Run up-stairs, and I'll tell you the news Dr. Garnet told me."

Poor little Joanna, when she rushed out of Mrs. Caruthers's door, had no definite idea as to what she would do about returning home; but reasoning, almost unconsciously, that, if Miss Caruthers had crossed from the other side, she could cross from this side, she hastened away to "THE SCENE OF THE DISASTER," as the Middleborough *Daily Messenger* put it, in capitals. Here a dense crowd was already assembled, which, after the manner of crowds, jostled and pushed the poor child about until her native courage was utterly routed. She had no fear of the rushing current; she was as ready as ever to brave the dangerous passage of the river; but receiving for all reply, to every timid inquiry she made for a boat to ferry her over, only a rude stare or a curt denial, she lost faith in mankind. At last, finding herself disentangled from the throng, she sat down upon a broken barrel, her heart full of sorrow and anxiety, to ponder the situation.

"I say ma'am, don't you b'long on t'other side?" asked a shock-headed young athlete, who espied her there.

"Yes," answered Joanna, rising promptly—"yes; and I want a boat to take me across."

"Got any money?"

"Why, n—o," stammered poor Joanna, who had not yet learned enough of the world to appreciate the force of King Solomon's admirable *mot*, "Money answereth all things"—"no; I haven't any money."

"Pity," said the boy; "its worth money to row across this river." And he turned away indifferent.

Just then Joanna recognized Aleck Griswold emerging from the crowd, and hailed him with joy.

"Aleck! Aleck! what are you doing here? Are you going back?"

"Laws! Miss Jo-an-na!" said Aleck, every feature expressive of astonishment. "What on aith—" Then, with sober gravity: "Luke, he died 'bout daybreak, and I come across with *his measure*. Do you want to git back?"

"Oh, I'm very sorry," said Joanna, striving to look properly sympathizing, and failing utterly, in her eagerness about her own concerns. "Oh, yes, indeed! I *do* want to get back, Aleck. If you will take me across—I've no money—but I'll give you something or other."

"All right," said Aleck. "I don't need

no pay after all Miss Basil has done for us."

He then led the way down the bank to a rickety little *bateau*, into which Joanna stepped eagerly, and without a shadow of misgiving. "They that know nothing, fear nothing," says the proverb; and Joanna, though she had lived upon the bank of this rushing river all her life, had never been upon the water before, and little knew the grave danger she incurred. The current was swift and strong, the boat was leaky, and the pilot unskillful; but Joanna sat serenely in her place, though a piece of timber from the broken bridge, becoming disengaged, bore down upon the adventurous navigators and nearly capsized them. And Joanna never knew that in escaping from this peril the wretched little craft was very near being carried over the falls.

Those on shore knew, however, and looked upon her escape almost as a miracle. Little Mr. Leason, the clergyman, who was among the crowd of excited spectators, offered up a silent prayer for the safety of these two unknown children; and the moment the boat touched the bank he lifted Joanna out with a devout ejaculation of thanksgiving. "Were you mad," he said, trembling violently, "were you mad, to risk your life so recklessly? Do you know that you have come back from the very gates of death?" He was a very nervous man, and it would have been a great relief to his feelings to shake this reckless Joanna well; but Joanna burst into tears, and his next action was to turn and collar the daring youth that had brought her safely over.

"My *reak* was as great as hern," said the lad, coolly, which raised a laugh among the by-standers, and won him his release.

"How came you to be on the other side?" said Mr. Leason, leading Joanna away from the crowd. But Joanna could not answer for sobbing. "Dear, dear, dear," said he, nervously; "now I wish you wouldn't. It's all right, now, you see; but you mustn't do so again."

"I wish I had died!" sobbed Joanna. "It would have been all over now, and an end of trouble."

"Oh, oh! don't say that, my child, that's wicked. When the good God spares a young life out of such imminent risk, be sure he has work for you to do in this world. Go home and prepare to live for something."

These words sank deep in Joanna's heart; and, pondering on them as she hastened homeward, she said to herself that she would live for forgiveness and reconciliation. Her immediate care must be to see her aunt, and plead Anita's cause; but she sought her own room first; for Joanna remembered that she had not said her prayers that morning.

She was still on her knees when Miss Hawkesby entered the room, her head tied up in the silk handkerchief Anita called her battle-flag. The old lady had overslept herself, and, awaking with the mortifying consciousness that she had rather given in to Anita the night before, she determined to redeem her character for inflexibility of purpose.

Her first care had been to ring for the servant, and send to inquire about Anita, who, she had no doubt, was still sleeping soundly; for, of all things in the world, Anita hated early rising.

Candace, the airy, officious maid, was gone long; and, when at last she returned, she brought no tidings of Miss Anita.

"I've looked for her high and low, and not a trace can I find, ma'am. But there's a great tramping of horses and carriage-tracks down to the *futher* gate; and here's what I found in the walk." And Candace held up by the corners a soiled handkerchief, which she had picked out of the mud, and in the corner of which Miss Hawkesby read the name *Basil Redmond*.

"Take it out of my sight!" she cried, furiously, "and burn it!" Then, full of wrath and forebodings dire, the old lady rose and tied on the silk handkerchief with the purple border. Her head was beginning to ache violently, and her temper did not improve under this infliction. Candace had hardly gotten to the kitchen with her news, when Miss Hawkesby's bell again rang, loud and long. This time it was Miss Joanna she demanded.

"But Miss Joanna ain't here," said Candace, with an air of mystery.

"Didn't Miss Basil come home last night?" asked Miss Hawkesby, snappishly. "Tell her I must see her immediately."

"Miss Basil didn't come home till broad day; and she hadn't been here more'n a hour or so before she was sent for to go to Mrs. Stargold, who's dying, I suppose from that; Miss Basil is always sent for to death-beds."

"Have you any more news?" said Mrs. Hawkesby, with dry severity.

"Yes'm," said Candace, briskly. "There's been a *terrible* storm, and Middleborough bridge is carried *clean away*; and people is now crossing in skiffs."

"Has that any thing to do with the young ladies?" asked Miss Hawkesby, irately.

"I thought you'd like to hear, ma'am," Candace made answer, in an offended tone.

"No, I don't like to hear," said Miss Hawkesby, ungratefully. "Go ask how Mrs. Basil finds herself this morning. She was complaining last night. I suppose she, at least, is at home?"

Candace went, and returned with the information that Mrs. Basil was not at all well, and would breakfast in her own room; and the request that, as neither Miss Basil nor the young ladies were at home, Miss Hawkesby also would order her breakfast up-stairs.

"She's going round to Mrs. Stargold's herself, as soon as she feels a little strengthened," added Candace, of her own accord.

"I don't believe Elizabeth Stargold is going to die," said Miss Hawkesby to herself; then aloud to Candace: "I'll take a cup of coffee; nothing more."

While Miss Hawkesby was drinking the coffee, she looked out of the window and saw her niece Joanna coming up the broad walk to the house. The child was pale and haggard, and had, altogether, a very disordered appearance; but Miss Hawkesby, when she saw her, hardened her heart. "If she has gotten herself up for effect, she'll find she can't impose upon *me*," said the old lady, aloud, as she poured herself out a second cup. But when she had had her coffee, she did not send for Joanna to come to her; she went herself to Joanna, and found her on her knees. The sight only moved her wrath.

"You do well, my young lady," she said, severely, as Joanna rose; "a guilty conscience should bring you to your knees." She had no doubt whatever that Joanna had connived at Anita's flight.

"Aunt Hawkesby," said Joanna, shrinking before that awfully-stormy visage, "I deserve your displeasure; I am unworthy of all your kindness."

"Where is your sister?" asked Miss Hawkesby, sternly.

The dread question made Joanna pause, as if loath to admit in words the unwelcome

truth that Anita was gone. Her eyes wandered slowly round the room, and rested at last upon a full-length painted photograph of her sister pinned against the wall, in the place of the chromo, "The Bluebird's Nest." Anita had pinned it there before she made her confession to Joanna, and had afterward forgotten it; and it had escaped Joanna's notice hitherto. But now, from where she stood, she could read the word "Farewell" penciled beneath. She covered her face with her hands, and said, faintly, "Gone!"

Miss Hawkesby, following the direction of Joanna's glance, strode up to the picture, snatched it down and tore it into fragments. Joanna uttered a cry of pain that only inflamed her aunt's anger.

"What had *you* to do with this pretty business, you meek-faced baby?" she cried, shaking Joanna, angrily.

"Aunt Hawkesby, forgive her!" said Joanna, sinking down, for she could no longer stand. "She has done wrong; but she had an evil counselor in that Miss Caruthers. I tried, oh, I tried so hard to prevent it all. I went across the bridge in the storm yesterday, but I did not know Miss Caruthers when I met her. And then the bridge went down, and I couldn't get back."

"You knew it all, and you would not tell me?" said Miss Hawkesby, furiously.

"I could not betray my sister," said Joanna. "I have done wrong, I know; but it was because I could see no way for me to do right. I could not betray my sister."

"Well, well, Joanna," said Miss Hawkesby, relenting a little, "everybody does wrong some time or other in life, and you are very young."

"And she is young, too!" cried Joanna, eagerly. "O Aunt Hawkesby, forgive her, because she is young; and you—you are old!"

But the unconscious pathos of this speech did not touch Miss Hawkesby.

"I *won't* forgive her!" she cried, wrathfully. "She is young, and I—am old; I thank you for reminding me, Miss Joanna Hawkesby; but for that very reason I tell you I *won't* forgive her. Last night Miss Anita coolly objects to my company because I *snore*; and this morning *you* remind me that I am old! A graceless pair, both of you! But I'm not in my dotage. You may write and tell Mrs. Redmond that I discard her forever; and

after that, if ever you attempt to hold any communication with her, I'll discard you. Do you understand? These are the terms upon which I forgive you."

"Aunt Hawkesby! Aunt Hawkesby!" cried Joanna, with bitter tears, "she is my sister!"

Here the door was thrown open suddenly, and, to the surprise of both, Anita herself ran in, crying, "Joanna! Joanna! you child, how wretched I've been about you!"

Joanna uttered a little cry and sprang toward her; and the two threw their arms around each other, utterly regardless of old Miss Hawkesby, who stiffened and stiffened with wrath and virtuous indignation; but she had no intention of going away until she should have spoken her mind. At last she said, disdainfully:

"This young lady is under *my* protection, Mrs. Redmond."

"That's not my name, aunt," said Anita, coolly.

Miss Hawkesby stared.

"And why is it not your name, I should like to know? I won't have any quibbles played off upon me."

"Joanna can tell you why it isn't my name," said Anita. "It is all her fault; she wouldn't hear to it."

"Do you mean to say that you didn't run away and get married?" asked old Miss Hawkesby, anxiously.

"No; I meant to do it, but Joanna wouldn't let me. She says people ought to be married respectably at home."

"Joanna is a wise little girl," said Miss Hawkesby, going over and kissing Joanna. "And where have you been, then, Anita?"

"Looking for Joanna," said Anita. "O Aunt Hawkesby, all night long I have been half-wild about the fate of this child, and I dared not tell you. You don't know what danger she has gone through. She has risked her life twice in order to persuade me to be married respectably at home."

"I wish you would tell a plain story in a plain way, Anita," said Miss Hawkesby, querulously. "I'm not going to scold, child; I'm too glad to have you back. You see, I'm old, as Joanna says, and it would be a bitter thing to have the child I've reared bring derision and contempt upon my gray hairs." And Miss Hawkesby wiped her eyes.

"So Joanna reminded me," said Anita, gently. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she put her arms around her aunt, and whispered: "Forgive me, for Joanna's sake! O Aunt Hawkesby, if I had never found my sister again! I lay awake all night long in agony of mind—"

"Ah, if you had only had a dose of chloral!" said Joanna.

"And then," continued Anita, "just as soon as it was day, I roused Miss Caruthers, and we went down to the river-bank. But she—well, we quarreled on the way—"

"I'm glad of that," said Miss Hawkesby; "I'm heartily glad of that."

"I don't know what became of her—"

"She's safe enough," said Joanna; "she says herself, naught is never in danger."

"That's spoken like a true Hawkesby, child," said her aunt, approvingly. "And what then?"

"And then," continued Anita, "Chancellor Page met me, and took me into his house; and after a while Mr. Leasom came and brought me the joyful tidings of Joanna's safety."

"Well, you two girls are enough to drive a steady-minded woman crazy!" said Miss Hawkesby. "Now begin at the beginning—"

But here a violent ringing of the door-bell interrupted them, and brought Mrs. Basil out of her room in alarm. "I don't know what this may mean," said she, tremulously; "will you come with me down-stairs? I feel very feeble." So Anita and Joanna each gave Mrs. Basil an arm, and Miss Hawkesby followed behind, bearing the ivory-headed staff, like an usher.

The bell was speedily answered by Candace, who had been on the alert all the morning; and the doors of Basilwood opened to admit a procession of three, led by Mrs. Ruffner, flushed, agitated, and fanning herself with inelegant vigor as she trotted along. Behind her came Miss Ruffner, with her head very high, her lips compressed, and her eyes ablaze. Sam brought up the rear, lounging along with a decidedly sheepish, downcast look.

"What in the name of wonder brings these people here, at this time of day?" said Miss Hawkesby to herself, as she composed her features for the occasion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

"O my good cousin, *such* news—such extraordinary news!" panted Mrs. Ruffner, breathlessly, as she rushed to embrace Mrs. Basil, who was feebly leaning on the back of her arm-chair. "You'll be astounded."

"O my poor, dear cousin Rowena!" cried Miss Ruffner, "how I do feel for you!"

"Is any thing the matter with Arthur?" faltered Mrs. Basil.

"Arthur is perfectly safe in life and limb," said Miss Ruffner, stiffly.

"No worse off than I am—ha, ha!" said Sam, forcing his "radiant" smile. "Extraordinary, most extraordinary!" And then he subsided into a corner, not seeing Anita, and left the field to the women.

"Perhaps I had better retire," said Miss Hawkesby; but she was by no means anxious to go.

"La, no; you may consider yourself in luck to be present," said Mrs. Ruffner. "Such news, and no secret!"

"No; stay by all means," said Miss Ruffner. "Your presence will be a support."

Anita had already withdrawn. She had little doubt that Mrs. Ruffner had come to discuss her escapade, and she didn't care to stay. But Joanna, for the same reason, had decided to remain: somebody must fight Anita's battles; but, in the excitement, she escaped notice.

"Is—is Mrs. Stargold, our dear cousin, then, no more?" asked Mrs. Basil, in faltering accents.

"Dead? La, no, my dear!" said Mrs. Ruffner, with that imperturbable good-nature nothing could damp. "Why should we be here, you know, if she were dead?"

"True, true," murmured Mrs. Basil. "I forgot."

"No, she is not dead," said Miss Ruffner, snappishly, "nor likely to die. I always knew that there was nothing serious the matter with her. But, O my poor cousin Rowena"—with a doleful shake of the head—"how I do feel for you! To think what a deceiver you've cherished in your bosom!"

"Strong language," said old Miss Hawkesby, with some vague idea that Miss Ruffner referred to Anita.

"I do not understand," said Mrs. Basil,

tremulously, raising her hand to her head as she sank into her chair. "Won't you be seated, and explain?"

"Yes, Miss Hawkesby," said Miss Ruffner, throwing herself upon the sofa, "I use strong language, for my feelings on this subject are strong."

"La, yes; and our cousin here won't object, I'm sure," said Mrs. Ruffner, "when she—"

"No, mother; I stipulated when we decided to come that I was to state the case," said Miss Ruffner.—"I feel for you, Cousin Rowena. I knew you counted so upon the inheritance for Arthur, as it was natural that you should, though you must acknowledge that none of us ever encouraged your expectations. I never heard Mrs. Stargold speak of doing any thing for Arthur, beyond giving him a piece of plate with an appropriate inscription; but, of course, as her relatives, we all felt that we had a claim upon her; and now to think that, after all these years of oblivion, Francis Hendall's widow should arise to set up her claim!"

"Francis Hendall's widow!" cried Mrs. Basil, with energy, starting up. "Where? how?" she asked, helplessly, sinking back again.

"Francis Hendall's widow?" repeated Miss Hawkesby, interrogatively. "I remember that, long ago, Elizabeth said something about her brother having a wife. He *was* really married, then?"

"We never believed that he was married," said Mrs. Basil, in her old, positive manner.

"But we may believe it now!" cried Mrs. Ruffner, as triumphantly as though she herself had never joined vehemently in the denial. "Francis Hendall's widow exists!"

"O my poor cousin!" said Miss Ruffner, again, "you have my sympathies. Francis Hendall's widow—his lawful widow—exists. Compose yourself—"

"I am perfectly composed, thank you," said Mrs. Basil, haughtily; but she trembled, and Miss Ruffner saw that she trembled.

"Nerve yourself to bear it," she continued, in the same tone. "We came to prepare you. It is a great blow; but it would be mistaken kindness to withhold the knowledge from you. Francis Hendall's widow is none other than the woman you have known

and sheltered as the judge's cousin, Miss Basil."

"Mela's secret!" cried Joanna, wildly. The room seemed to go round and round with her.

Mrs. Basil, who had risen under this tantalizing exordium, staggered as though she had indeed received a blow; but she rallied immediately. "I do not believe it!" she said. "If it were so, why has it remained buried so long? I'm sorry for Pamela; but all of us know that Francis Hendall was wild—"

"It has taken Cousin Elizabeth time to accumulate and arrange the facts in the case," interrupted Miss Ruffner. "They say there isn't a flaw in the evidence. If she hadn't been so mortally secret about it, we might have interfered. Things were well enough as they stood; what's the good of making a matter of conscience of a dead and buried secret to stir up such startling changes?"

"Conscience is Elizabeth Stargold's strong point," said Miss Hawkesby.

"Her weak point, I say!" Miss Ruffner retorted, snappishly. "But we've Arthur to thank for it all; it is he that is at the bottom of this piece of work, with that awkward pistol of his bursting open that old escritoire of Francis Hendall's, where his letters and other mementos were kept."

"Well," said Mrs. Basil, peevishly, "what had that to do with it? Did Mrs. Stargold find the proofs among the old letters?"

"No, indeed, nothing of the kind," said Miss Ruffner. "But reading over those old letters set her to thinking about her brother's last illness, when he spoke of his marriage as recent, and of his wife as still living."

"I remember," said Mrs. Basil, coldly. "His statements were confused, and the physicians said that his mind was wandering. None of us believed that he had a wife."

"Yes; and now Mrs. Stargold reproaches us all for having dissuaded her from making any attempt to find her brother's widow years ago. We had a prudent dread of impostors; but she didn't wish our advice, and for that reason, among others, she has kept the matter so close. But it is all right now, you may be sure. She has verified every date; she instituted strict inquiries, and now she talks of nothing but reparation, and

Francis's memory, and all that. This morning she sent for her brother's widow, and such a scene as we had! Good Heaven!"

"And why," said Mrs. Basil, querulously—"why have I been kept all this time in the dark? Pamela might have confided in me; indeed, she should have done so."

"But," said Sam, speaking for the first time, "the mischief of it, for her, was just this: she could bring no proof of her marriage. The clergyman that performed the ceremony died, and the only witness disappeared. Francis Hendall had the marriage certificate and all, and there she was, you see—ha! ha! Besides, she knew and married him under his middle name of Harmer, you know. I don't suppose he meant to abandon her when he left her. He probably wished to reconcile his family to the match before he acknowledged his marriage; but he died, you see—and there she was. Lucky thing for her that Mrs. Stargold's emissaries stumbled upon that only witness. Basil Redmond happened to hear an old man in a hospital tell a story that tallied with this, and he followed him up."

"Pamela is an excellent creature; oh, yes, an excellent creature," said Mrs. Basil, tremulously. "I am very glad to see justice done her. But she can't expect to inherit the whole of Francis Hendall's property; she's only his widow," she added, in a tone of satisfaction.

"But, begging your pardon, the best part of the story is yet to come," said Miss Ruffner, indignant against the spite of Fortune. "Francis Hendall left, not only a widow, but a son; and that son—Sam named him just now—Basil Redmond."

"Basil Redmond is the son of Warren Redmond, whose wife was a Basil; I know all about him," said Mrs. Basil, with a positive air. "The judge, my husband—"

"So the young man himself believed until this morning," interrupted Miss Ruffner, ruthlessly. "Oh, there is no mistake about it. Miss Basil—for my part I can't call her any thing else—had letters and papers from the Redmonds to prove it. Such a scene as we had! The young man fainted. Of course Cousin Elizabeth must know that it is a losing game for her—but I suppose she finds comfort in the approval of her conscience. I must do her the justice to say that she did attempt to prepare us yesterday. She wished

to send for Miss Basil then, but the storm was raging, and Dr. Garnet persuaded her to wait until this morning. But this son was a revelation none of us looked for."

"Hem! hem!" said Miss Hawkesby, with thoughts too big for utterance. "I congratulate Mrs. Francis Hendall. I have a great esteem for her, and am glad to see justice done her, though it comes so late in the day. As for her son—"

"A clever fellow enough, and in for luck," said Sam.

"Pamela is highly deserving—highly," said Mrs. Basil, slowly. Words seemed to fail her.

"Well, for *my* part," said Miss Ruffner, with spiteful emphasis, "I cannot so readily reconcile myself to it. I always looked upon that woman as occupying a very different sphere from ourselves. And to think of the endless talk to which it must all give rise!"

"Oh, indeed, it will make a great stir," said Mrs. Ruffner, with uncton. "Such a piece of news! La, don't you remember about Miss Crane's dream? Extraordinary! But it does take eight letters to spell Stargold, and seven to spell Basil; no, I don't mean Basil, but Hendall.—La, Jane, what time is it? The flowers on my bonnet were perfectly ruined yesterday by the rain; I ought to go to Lebrun's for fresh ones."

"It is one o'clock," said Miss Ruffner, snapping her watch viciously. "You may be sure the news is all over Middleborough by this time. Wasn't Dr. Garnet present yesterday afternoon? And didn't he return this morning to learn the sequel?"

"I've always had a regard for Pamela," babbled Mrs. Basil, unconscious that she was interrupting; "but she was always very reticent with me—very reticent. And Joanna—Joanna is my husband's granddaughter; I never forget that."

"La, yes," cried Mrs. Ruffner; "that child, now—but this makes no difference to her; *she's* just as much nobody as ever she was."

"I beg your pardon," growled old Miss Hawkesby; "she's *my* niece."

"Oh, la; to be sure! I beg *your* pardon," said Mrs. Ruffner, whom nothing could abash; "but I forgot that."

"I've always done *my* duty by Joanna," continued Mrs. Basil, speaking with effort. "I hope Pamela will provide for her, now

that she has means. But *I* never put any faith in Lydia Crane's visions—Lydia Crane's vis—"

She stared round the room with an imbecile smile, and the next instant fell back, rigid.

"Oh! oh!—the grandmamma!" screamed Joanna, springing to her side, but instantly shrinking away, appalled at the ghastly distortion of the poor woman's once comely features.

"It is a stroke!" cried Mrs. Ruffner. "Heaven preserve us, I say!"

"Run for the doctor, Sam!" said Miss Ruffner.

"Go for Miss Basil, Joanna," said Miss Hawkesby, forgetting that she whom the world had hitherto known as Miss Basil, bore a different name; yet remembering, the next moment, that that indispensable woman had not yet returned to Basilwood.—"But where is she?" she added, appealing to Miss Ruffner.

"She is with Mrs. Stargold, I fancy, swearing eternal devotion," said Miss Ruffner, peevishly. "At least we left her there."

Miss Hawkesby seemed to stay her with a look.

"Mrs. Basil's case is serious, I fear," said she, ringing the bell. "We must have her taken to her room. What to do for her, *I* don't know. I wish in my heart that good and sensible woman were here."

"Oh, Dr. Garnet, he'll know, when he comes," said Mrs. Ruffner, cheerfully. She had pulled off Mrs. Basil's shoes, and was rubbing her feet with vigor, but to little purpose.

"It will be some time before he can be here, though, I fear," said Miss Hawkesby, anxiously. "The bridge, you know, was carried away by the storm, and—"

"You don't tell me so!" cried Mrs. Ruffner, in dismay. "Then one couldn't get to Lebrun's? What a misfortune!"

"We must call the servants," said Miss Ruffner, "and take her to her room. Poor Cousin Rowena! See what it is to have one's heart set upon riches. A great shock—a great shock. I hope it may not terminate fatally."

Mrs. Basil was carried to her room, where she remained for the rest of her days, a helpless prisoner. Dr. Garnet, when he

came, shook his head gravely, saying that he feared the worst: but when he had exhausted his skill and gone away, the Ruffners returned home to decide upon their plans; Miss Hawkesby and Anita lay down to rest; and only Joanna remained, sitting sobbing by the stricken woman's bedside.

"The grandmamma was good to me," she thought, remembering with simple gratitude the occasional funeral rides in the rickety carriage, the unrestricted access to the old garden, the polonaise, the lace handkerchief, the Roman sash, and the invitation to the dinner-party.

Worn out, at last, with excitement, fatigue, and exhaustion, she fell asleep in her chair, by the head of Mrs. Basil's massive, old-fashioned bedstead. It was an uneasy slumber, from which she was awakened by the grim Myra, saying in an awesome whisper:

"Miss J'anna! Miss J'anna! Miss Pamela has come and *sont* for you."

Joanna roused herself with a start. It was late. The sun had long gone down, and the twilight gloom now hung about the silent house, investing the dark and heavy furniture with an uncanny aspect.

"You go, and I'll stay," said Myra, still in that blood-chilling whisper, and nodding her turban with a ghoulish air at Mrs. Basil, lying in a sort of stupor. "*She* ought not to be left."

Joanna rose with a shudder and left the room. All that she had heard that morning had startled and bewildered her painfully. She felt, now, so far and so strangely removed from her whom she had known hitherto as the plain, hard-working manager of the affairs of Basilwood, and the strict, *uncomfortable* guardian of her own early years, that she seemed to herself like one in a dream, traversing vast spaces, as she wearily dragged her way through the dusky gloom of the long hall, to that familiar little nook, known as Miss Basil's room. She felt as though years had passed since yesterday, when she saw her prim cousin go forth in water-proof and over-shoes to carry comfort to the Griswolds: so true it is, "we live in feelings, not in figures on a dial." Poor Joanna trembled as she reflected that the prim cousin, who had gone out in the storm on her errand of mercy, could never more return; but that in her place had come a new

woman, with a new name and a new life; and, trembling thus, she entered the familiar, yet unfamiliar presence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LIVING FOR SOMETHING.

THE "late" Miss Basil was seated by the window, looking, except for a certain subdued excitement, much the same as usual; but, in the pale light, Joanna saw, with a pang of mingled dismay and indignation, that the bed was strewn with the treasures that had always been in the jealous keeping of the little brass-studded bureau in the corner—old-fashioned ornaments, fans, buckles, bead-bags—how keenly had Joanna, in her childish days, enjoyed the occasional glimpses chance had afforded of these hoarded relics of a day gone by! But to see them now, spread out to the light in this way, filled her with pain and resentment; it seemed to her as though *Mrs. Hendall* was about to administer upon Miss Basil's effects, and the old spirit of antagonism quickly took possession of Joanna's heart.

"O Joanna," said Miss Basil, or Mrs. Hendall, as she was henceforth to be called, speaking in a strange, excited voice, "come in; I have so much to say to you! The time has arrived—"

"Yes, 'Mela," said Joanna, whom habit still controlled; "I know I've been disobedient, and I've suffered enough for it. I promised you that I would not leave the house, and I went into the town through the storm and was caught there. It was all for Anita's sake."

"Well, child," said the Pamela of old, "it's no uncommon thing for you to be wise in your own conceit. Miss Hawkesby and your sister have told me all about it. I hope it will be an everlasting lesson to you. My son—" and it was Mrs. Hendall that spoke now—but she paused, and looked at Joanna, half in pride, and half in embarrassment; whereupon, Joanna, assuming a stony bearing, only said—

"I know."

"Anita admits that she is chiefly to blame," continued Pamela, with the new voice and manner that belonged to Mrs. Hendall, "and I waive all discussion on the

subject—for the present, at least, Joanna—"and now it was clearly the old, original Pamela that spoke—"I wish now to speak of other things," resumed Mrs. Hendall. "Miss Hawkesby tells me that you have this morning heard—my story."

"Yes, 'Mela."

"It is unnecessary, then, for me to go over it again," said Pamela, nervously. "Your aunt, Miss Hawkesby, is a woman of character, Joanna, a woman of sterling character. I didn't rightly appreciate her at first—owing to circumstances—but she's uncommonly sensible. Not one in a hundred could understand so readily my position—my *changed* position. She has met me at once on equal ground, and has advised me most sensibly. She agrees with all my views. She thinks the details of my—story should be known; and I don't intend to be secret in this matter. Some day, I shall tell you all about my life before I came here; but it is enough, now, to say that when I was young and foolish, like you, Joanna, I allowed myself to be persuaded into a clandestine marriage."

"But I wouldn't have done that *ever*, 'Mela," said Joanna, not without a conscious superiority.

"Joanna," said Pamela, with asperity, "don't assume to sit in judgment upon those that have seen more of life than you have."

"No, 'Mela," said Joanna, meekly.

"I am well aware," continued Mrs. Hendall, with an access of dignity, "that those Ruffners have not spared comment; but I am prepared for envy, hatred, and malice; and Heaven forbid that I should cast any reflections upon any one! No, Joanna; I trust that I appreciate my position. I've had a long period of trial in God's providence to prepare me for this, no doubt."

"Yes, I know, 'Mela," said Joanna, sadly. "Every thing is changed."

"Yes; and I trust that I shall accept the change in a proper spirit," said Mrs. Hendall, with a rising flush, and a very perceptible flutter. "I shall feel it my duty to study whatever is becoming to my changed position in every respect. I've been looking over my possessions. Many of these things have come into fashion again, I find, and can well be used. They will save unnecessary expenditure, which in all cases it is a duty to avoid. But—my son has told me that he

likes dress; and your aunt, Miss Hawkesby, a very sensible woman, advises me to adopt a different style. Still, I shall dress from a sense of duty and fitness, and not for vain-glory. For, Joanna, let me warn you: when riches increase, set not your heart upon them. I've been quite exercised as to the effect this change might have upon you."

"I have no riches, 'Mela," said Joanna, quietly.

"As if it were not all the same!" said Pamela, tartly. "You don't seem the least glad, Joanna; you don't seem to care at all for the good fortune that has befallen me, after all these years, too! I was up all last night; and yet I couldn't sleep now a wink, if I tried, for thinking of all these things that have happened so strangely, and contriving how to have my clothes altered so as to save expense, and yet dress to please my son—my son that was taken away from me so long! He is mine now, before the world. Yet you don't appear to be the least glad!"

"O 'Mela!" cried Joanna, bursting into tears. "Forgive me! I am glad for you, very glad for you; but oh, so sorry for myself!"

"I wish you wouldn't, Joanna," said Pamela, querulously. "The judge, your grandfather, left you to me. One might think I've threatened to abandon you. You reflect upon me, really. Of course you are just the same to me as ever. My sister-in-law, Mrs. Stargold, has acted in a most praiseworthy manner. The greater part of her property came from—from my son's father, and she voluntarily surrenders it to us—to Basil and me, that is; and we shall all live together; we couldn't refuse her that; and, of course, this will be the better for you."

"Live here at Basilwood?" asked Joanna, innocently.

"Of course not, Joanna. What are you thinking of?"

"Mela," said Joanna, solemnly, "I am thinking of the grandmamma."

"Mrs. Basil. Yes," said Pamela, with sudden recollection. "Dr. Garnet says it's serious. But her relations must see to her."

"You are one of her relations," said Joanna, sturdily.

"Not by her permission, as I very well know," said Mrs. Hendall, with an angry flush. "And she has nearer relations than I."

"She has no one—no one!" cried Joan-

na, passionately. "She is like myself, she has nobody. You have found a fortune and a son. Anita and my aunt—they are reconciled to each other. But the poor grandmamma is alone. Mr. Arthur Hendall must be away, you know. The poor grandmamma, I cannot forsake her!"

"Do you owe so much to her?" said Pamela, bitterly.

"She never was unkind to me," said Joanna. "She took me to ride in her carriage; she let me pull the flowers as I pleased; she gave me that lovely polonaise when I hadn't a decent thing to wear; she had me at her dining; and she would have done more, she said so, if she had had the means."

"And shall not I now give you your heart's desire?" cried Pamela, irritably. "I know how your heart is set upon dress, Joanna, notwithstanding all my diligence to inculcate a proper indifference to such vanities, and I'm quite prepared to hear you say that you must have all the new fashions; and, indeed, to a certain extent—"

"No, 'Mela," interrupted Joanna, gravely, "I do like the pomps and vanities, as you say; but my heart is not set on them. I am not caring *now* about the new fashions; I am caring about living for something—"

"Mercy guide us! What *has* come over the child?" cried Pamela, uneasily.

"A great change, 'Mela," said Joanna, with a sigh. "I know that I have been a trouble and a care to you all my days, that I can never repay all you have done for me; but, just now, you do not need me"—and here poor Joanna's voice almost forsook her—"and the grandmamma does."

"I am to give you up to her, then?" cried Pamela, stormily. "And what do I owe her, that I should make such a sacrifice? It was her fault entirely that my boy went away, and was lost to me all these years."

"He was not lost to you," said Joanna, with gentle reproach. "Is he not restored to you now?"

"Nothing can ever restore the years that are gone," said Pamela, bitterly.

"O 'Mela!" said Joanna, "you pray about every thing; did you not pray when all this good fortune befell you unawares? As for me, I know this, that God has put it into my heart to stay with the grandmamma in her—extremity; and, when she needs me no more, then—O 'Mela! my 'Mela! I can-

not give you up forever!—*then* may I come to you, and find you, for all your new name, and your new—estate, unchanged to me?"

And, with these words, Joanna, in a wild outburst of weeping, threw herself into her cousin's arms, and was comforted. She was comforted, because Pamela, too much overcome to preach, could only clasp her and weep with her.

Indeed, this new Pamela, who was henceforth to be known as Mrs. Hendall, was already beginning to resign faith in her own judgment in favor of the son whom she was now entitled to acknowledge before the world. She loved Joanna better, because *he* had praised her; and she admired this child, even while she disapproved, for the earnestness with which she persisted in a course that promised nothing but hardship and difficulty. *Nothing!* Had this long-suffering Pamela then learned so little from the lesson of her life? "The child does not know what she would undertake," she said to herself; "just when she might have all she wants, too; for is she not as much mine now as ever? But my son shall reason with her."

And, soothed by this reflection, Pamela, by silence, seemed to acquiesce in all Joanna's wishes.

But Joanna was not to be dissuaded from her purpose. When Pamela's son came to tell her about his mother's plans, in which he insisted that Joanna was entitled to be considered, he found her firm in her determination to remain with Mrs. Basil.

"I live, and therefore I must live for something," she said, simply. "I am very young, I know, and not very wise; I cannot do great things; but I can do what I see is to be done." (The little Joanna was wiser than she knew.) "The poor grandmamma was never unkind to me, and she is all alone. I can try to be a comfort to her, and begin to live for something."

"Is there nothing else you can accomplish in your zeal to do good, Joanna?" said he, eagerly. "Can you not plead mine and your sister's cause? Joanna, you must talk to my mother; you must talk to your aunt; you are in high favor now, and you ought to be willing to atone for the mischief you did us."

"People should be married respectably at home," said this proper young maiden. "But I will talk to Pamela and to my aunt,

if you think it would make Anita happy."

"I'm not so very sure about that," said Anita, mockingly.—"Joanna, you wretched little marplot! I might have married a poor man from disinterested affection; but now this wicked world, with Aurelia Caruthers at their head, will brand me as a mercenary creature—why, don't you know how ardently she espouses Sam Ruffner's cause?"

"I shouldn't mind Aurelia Caruthers," said Joanna, loftily. And then she went to talk to Pamela and her aunt; and, of course, she carried her point.

But when Miss Hawkesby, whose heart was now ardently set upon having her long-neglected little niece to live with her, would fain have persuaded Joanna to leave the care of Mrs. Basil to some more competent person, she received only the solemn answer, "I must live for something." Then Miss Hawkesby entreated Mrs. Stargold to reason with Joanna; but the consequence was, that Mrs. Stargold became Joanna's champion.

"None of you can understand this child as I do," said she—"I, who have just tasted the supreme satisfaction of abjuring my own advantage for the sake of others. Joanna must not be denied a like satisfaction, say I; who can estimate the good it may do her? Joanna must have her way in this." To Mrs. Hendall and Miss Hawkesby she said, privately, "It can last but a little while, and we must so arrange as to relieve the child of all care and responsibility." And so Joanna had her way.

It was arranged, then, upon consultation with Arthur Hendall, who had been sent for in haste, that Mrs. Basil should have a competent attendant and nurse. Then Pamela's son wished to devote some of his unexpected wealth to Joanna's benefit. But in this, young-man-like, he bungled sadly. He owed so much, he said, to the good old judge, that Joanna ought to be willing to let him afford her the means of improving her education; whereupon old Miss Hawkesby took fire, and indignantly declared that her niece should never be indebted to *him* for any such thing; that since Joanna was obstinately bent upon secluding herself at Basilwood, she, her aunt, should see that a fitting governess was installed to watch over the child. "Do not I know everybody?" cried she. "And are there not numbers of impoverished women

among our best families who would be thankful to occupy such a place? Leave that to me, my young friend, and don't concern yourself about matters too high for you. You'll find Anita quite enough to manage."

"Thank you, aunt," said Anita. "You are a wise woman in your predictions; you always said I never should be Mrs. Basil Redmond."

"Well, well," said Miss Hawkesby, "I always knew you must sooner or later acknowledge my wisdom. And so, you'll see, I'll put the right woman in the right place when I engage a governess for our Joanna."

So, Miss Hawkesby, before she returned to the world where she knew everybody, consoled herself for the forfeiture of Joanna, by installing one of those numerous acquaintances as duenna; and Joanna, under this lady's protecting presence, quietly settled down to her new life, not a sad one by any means. For, though Mrs. Basil never left her room again while she lived, she so far recovered as to be able to occupy the wheeled-chair that Arthur sent her, and to prattle mildly about the little interests that Joanna, by dint of birds, flowers, pictures, and fancy-work, contrived to create for her. Her mind had received an irreparable shock; she had no recollection of what had befallen her; but she seemed, in some confused way, to identify Joanna with Arthur, and her only fear was that Miss Hawkesby would come and take away the companion of her solitude.

Mrs. Stargold and her new-found relatives went to a place near by, which they repaired and made their permanent residence. The Ruffners departed precipitately for Westport. If they had wished to ignore Francis Hendall's widow and son, they must have found that the public sentiment of Middleborough, led by Mrs. Carl Tomkins, was too strong for them to resist. It was impossible, while that all-pervading spirit claimed to inspire society in our town, to deny that Mrs. Francis Hendall's remarkable character and extraordinary abilities amply entitled her to Fortune's favors. And this sentiment Mrs. Carl Tomkins took occasion to propagate betimes, as she went from house to house, a few days after the storm, asking contributions to an ice-cream supper to be given in connection with the postponed tableaux, for the purpose of reestablishing the bridge on a sure and firm basis. Such an opportunity for a display

of public spirit was not to be neglected by a woman of Mrs. Carl Tomkins's capacity for business.

To this entertainment Joanna went; and she would not have been Joanna if she had not keenly enjoyed the crowd, the excitement, the dazzle, and blaze, and the perfection of her toilet, that Anita herself superintended; but these delights could not shake her purpose to remain with Mrs. Basil. And not even the glory of acting as first bride's-maid to Anita, attired in the white organdie and scarlet geraniums, could make her repent her choice to stay with the grandmamma until she should need her no more. Indeed, nobody could supply her place to Mrs. Basil; and, though Mrs. Francis Hendall or Mrs. Stargold came for a few moments every day, they had many other interests to absorb their time and attention, and Joanna, for the most part, was left alone with her afflicted charge, who would not endure the presence of Miss Hawkesby's friend the governess.

The waning summer changed to autumn, and autumn gave place to winter, and winter yielded to spring, and spring grew into summer again. And all this time there was little perceptible alteration in the condition of the poor paralytic; but in Joanna what a wondrous change was wrought! What a calm and star-like beauty shone in that thin, brown face of hers, thinner now, and paler, for lack of that freedom of the garden, the one great boon that inspired her gratitude to the grandmamma, who moaned and whimpered when her tender little ministrant left her, and smiled and feebly stretched out her almost useless hands in welcome when she came again. In all this, Joanna found a heavenly joy the garden could never yield, even in the time of apple-blooms.

And Arthur Hendall, who in the beginning paid short duty-visits at long intervals, came oftener at last, and staid longer, in spite of that watchful dragon, the governess, Miss Hawkesby's friend, who, if the truth be told, entertained rather a motherly weakness for Arthur, and favored him above everybody else. For, if Middleborough gossip may be believed, Joanna was not without abundant temptation to abandon her self-imposed service. Sam Ruffner, learning (from his mother, probably, through Lydia Crane) that Miss Hawkesby regarded this niece with peculiar favor, and that Mrs. Francis Hen-

dall still kept up the insurance on her life, quickly recovered from the depression caused by Anita's marriage, and, under pretense of solicitude for his afflicted relative, came up from Westport to pay his court to Joanna. Also Dr. Garnet, although Dame Rumor had so long devoted him to Aurelia Caruthers, offered to endow the judge's penniless granddaughter with his name and all his worldly possessions; and nervous little Mr. Leasom prayed her to share his quiet life.

Time was when these conquests, inasmuch as they implied no badly-broken hearts, would have filled Joanna's soul with exultation; but now they were more a source of trial than of triumph. "I shall never marry," she declared; but she afterward modified this assertion so far as to say to Arthur, "I shall never marry while the grandmamma lives" — which amendment Arthur did not permit her to forget when Mrs. Basil, in the early autumn, was laid in the grave that so surprised us by its shortness, proving that

the stately lady who carried the ivory-headed staff with so grand an air was, after all, a woman of few inches.

"You say you must live for something, Joanna," said he, "and all this time you have been living for my aunt. So, by your own showing, to live for something means simply to live for somebody; and you may as well live for me."

And what did Miss Hawkesby say to this? "Well, Joanna, I suppose I am old, as you reminded me more than a year ago; but I'm not in my dotage, and I'm not going to oppose any young woman so bent on having her own way."

And Mrs. Francis Hendall, a sort of elevated and modified Pamela: "I hope, Joanna, that you will consider the solemnity of the step you are about to take, and not enter the holy estate of matrimony rashly nor from motives of vanity."

"And I shall take care that you are married respectably at home," cries Anita.

THE END.

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